

ABSTRACT

PRACTICE OF RULE OF LIFE AS A TOOL FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN VIEW OF MINISTRY IN UNION WITH CHRIST

by

Ethiege Upul Nishantha Silva

The practice of *rule of life* is a useful tool for living a holistic life with an assurance of a fruitful ministry through an intentional behavior that extends from union to communion, and community to crowd, as one abides in Christ. As long as ministers remain connected to the true vine, Jesus Christ, they will receive all the nourishment they need to grow, live, and serve like him. Therefore, ministry should flow out of who they are in Christ and not out of what ministers can or should do for Christ in the many pastoral activities of a local church. Unfortunately, misunderstandings exist among the pastors about ministry. In addition, the contemporary challenges of today's competitive society, the search for instant satisfaction, the demands of ministry, and the increasing pressure put on the pastor have tempted ministers to *do* ministry for Christ rather than to be intimate with the Lord.

Therefore, this project was designed to give pastors a clear biblical view of ministry in union with Christ and a focus on spiritual formation through the practice of spiritual disciplines, especially the rule of life. The purpose of this research was to empower and evaluate a group of fifteen independent church pastors in the northwestern province of Sri Lanka through the use of five specific spiritual disciplines.

The research was conducted through a triangulated, explanatory, mixed-method design based on three auto-evaluation surveys, namely, pretest and posttests, and a

preproject survey. Three spiritual formation seminars were conducted and three, reflective follow-up surveys were carried out, followed by three accountability group meetings.

The findings of this research demonstrated that the pastors who adhered to a personal rule of life on the basis of union with Christ, experienced a fruitful life and ministry along with their families and local churches. Pastors also emphasized the urgent need to establish periodic spiritual formation retreats as an essential part of their life and ministry in order to refresh, renew, and operate from an intimately connected intentional perspective in union with Christ.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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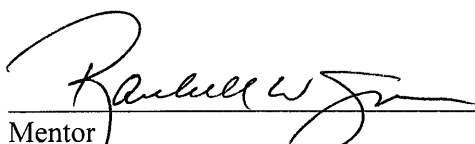
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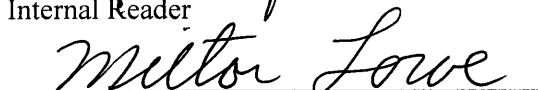
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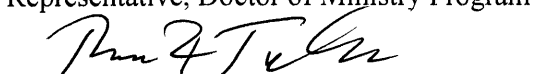
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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introduction

Pastoral ministry is a high calling and awesome responsibility. I have been privileged to serve as a pastor of several congregations over the years and still my great expectation and passion is to know and serve my Lord Jesus Christ. In him, pastors are called by God to become fully conformed, united with Christ to bear fruit and to offer a witness of him through service for the glory of his name.

Since I accepted Jesus Christ into my life in 1980, I have had access to many independent church pastors. I loved them and was impressed with their labor for the Lord. They received a little allowance from the church but genuinely worked for the Lord. They got up early in the morning, going from house to house until midnight, preaching the gospel. They did not think of their children and families, but their zeal was to serve the Lord with all they had. They walked for thousands of miles seeking the lost. They were satisfied with one meal per day and wore the same trouser and shirt for weeks. Working hard for the Lord and winning souls was their passion. They lived to serve the Lord whatever cost they had to pay.

However, observing the tragedies that pastors and their families went through, I was puzzled as to why pastoral ministry frequently appears to be more of a burden than a joy and why the ministry life of many pastors is so surprisingly short. Pastors who shared the gospel message, ministering to me, helping me grow in Christ and convincing me to serve the Lord, are no longer in ministry today. When observing the struggles and tragedies of many pastors, I have often thought and prayed, “O Lord, protect your servants so these situations will never happen to any of these pastors anymore.” In fact,

many pastors around the world are at risk of burning out and leaving the ministry due to the pressures placed on them and their families. These pressures have a devastating effect.

Reliable North American sources say, “90 percent of pastors [still] work more than 50 to 75 hours per week” (Krejcir). However, Richard J. Krejcir indicates the cost of such ministry:

One out of three pastors state that being in the ministry is clearly hazardous for their families. One out of three pastors felt totally burned out within the first five years of ministry. Over 70% of pastors do not have anyone they would consider to be a friend, and hardly any pastors had any close friends. We found that over 70% of pastors are so stressed out and burned out that they regularly consider leaving the ministry. Thirty-five to forty percent of pastors actually do leave the ministry, most after only five years. Ninety percent (90%) of pastors feel they were not adequately trained to cope with ministry coordination and the demands of the congregation. Seventy-five percent (75%) of pastors experience a significant crisis that they faced due to stress in the ministry.

Not only in Europe but also in Asia today, pastors are confronted with more ministerial activities, more stress, and many unique challenges in nearly every area of life.

Sometimes pastors seem to be successful in ministry at the expense of their spiritual lives and their families. Recent surveys say, “Eighty percent of pastors surveyed spend less than fifteen minutes a day in prayer. Seventy percent said the only time they spend studying the Word is when they are preparing their sermons” (Blake). These statistics may point towards the congregation or the church leadership, but pastors and leaders need to concentrate on changing their spiritual disciplines and approach to their ministries first.

In my early years of ministry most of the time I had the impression that ministry is something to do for Christ. I decided what jobs I would take, how I would do them, and when I would do them. I was not accountable to and did not take direction from a

higher authority. I was inconsistent in being with the Lord but more consistent in serving him. I proclaimed Christ as my Lord, but my ministry activities revealed that I was an independent contractor working for God. I confessed to the Lord my zeal to serve him not by abiding in him, but by being independent from him. The fruit of my ministry was fatigue, unhappiness, anguish and emptiness, not real love, peace and joy that Jesus promised to his disciples as they abide in him and serve him (John 15:9-11).

I was abiding in ministry activities rather than abiding in Jesus. At that point the Holy Spirit spoke to me through Jesus' words:

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bear much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers. (John 15:5-6, ESV)

The result of attempting ministry apart from a unity with Christ is always an utter failure. Will Wyatt says with clarity, "[I]f I am not abiding and trying to live my life and do ministry on my own initiative I am a zero" (105). This reality helped me to realize the importance of abiding in Jesus if I am going to be effective in ministry and also as seen through the examples of Jesus and Paul. Jesus did more ministry than any other apostle, but he knew the Father, and hence was doing the ministry of his Father (John 14:10). Apparently, Paul did more ministry than any other apostle, but he knew it was God doing the ministry through him (1 Cor. 15:10).

Andrew Purves rightly points out the problem of ministry apart from Christ:

Conceiving ministry as our ministry is the root problem of what ails us in ministry today. Ministry should be understood as sharing in the continuing ministry of Jesus Christ, for wherever Christ is, there is the church and her ministry. (*Crucifixion* 11)

Therefore, ministry is not what disciples do alone, but what Christ does through them as they abide in union with him.

I came to a point where I wanted to know what I should do to regain my intimacy with the Lord. Purves writes that the key is in discerning what Christ is doing:

[T]he first and central question in thinking about ministry is this: What is Jesus up to? That leads to the second question: How do we get “in” on Jesus’ ministry, on what he’s up to? The issue is not: How does Jesus get “in” on our ministries? (“Crucifixion” 1)

In Jesus’ words, the only way that individuals can be involved in his ongoing ministry is by abiding in him through the union and continuing in an intimate relationship with him. The power and strength for me to bear the fruit of love for others comes out of my intimate personal abiding in Christ.

Sean Michael Lucas commented on Jonathan Edwards’ idea of union and communion with Christ in ministry:

[T]he ministers of Christ ought to be eminently gracious and near to Christ, ... abiding and resting in Christ by faith, clinging to His promises, studying His word, continuing conversation with Him, depending on Him to bear fruit—all are requirements for pastoral leaders. (140)

For pastoral leaders, activity in ministry should not take precedence over abiding in Christ if ministry is to be fruitful but most of the time they forget their being rather than their doing. The emphasis on the practice of the works of ministry rather than on the life of ministry downplays the practice of abiding in Christ. Being in Christ is the very basis of ministry that requires personal intentional discipline on a regular basis becoming more like him to serve for others.

Churches worldwide, particularly Sri Lanka’s independent churches, have had a tendency to neglect this process of spiritual formation, although they have seen a surge of interest in recent years. This regular transformation into the full image and likeness of God to live like Christ and serve like him does not happen spontaneously as it requires intention and discipline. Therefore, this research is inspired by Jesus’ call for his

ministers to abide in him, the true vine, and concentrated on developing a rule of life as a spiritual formation tool for practicing intimacy with Christ, resulting in a fruitful life and ministry.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the changes in the level of spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and personal understanding of a *rule of life* among the pastors of the independent churches of the northwestern province of Sri Lanka who participated in three spiritual formation seminars.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

Research Question #1

What was the level of spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and personal understanding of a rule of life among the pastors of the independent churches of the northwestern province of Sri Lanka prior to the spiritual formation seminar?

Research Question #2

What was the level of spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and personal understanding of a rule of life among the pastors of the independent churches of the northwestern province of Sri Lanka after attending the spiritual formation seminar?

Research Question #3

What aspects of the three spiritual formation seminars had the most impact on the pastors in understanding spiritual disciplines and practice of a rule of life in view of union with Christ as a tool for spiritual formation?

Definition of Terms

Several key terms have a bearing on this study and need defining.

Spiritual Formation

Christian spiritual formation is not simply an event or ministerial activity of the church but a lifelong process that focuses on Jesus Christ. Wil Hernandez, commenting on Henri Nouwen's idea on *spirituality of ministry*, views the spiritual formation as "the process of being with Christ, in order to become like Christ, and consequently live for Christ" (32). M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. agrees, stating that spiritual formation as the "process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others" (15). The fact of developing a mutually close relationship with Christ and becoming like him in the process is part of spiritual formation. The emphasis in spiritual formation is the relationship between intimacy with God, the process of conforming to the image of Christ, and fruitfulness in ministry.

A Rule of Life

A rule of life is simply a structure in which spiritual formation is facilitated. Marjorie J. Thompson explains *rule of life* in terms of an intentional pattern of spiritual disciplines that are applied to spiritual growth (147). Mike King's view of *rule of life* is that the concept is not only an idea but an intention to place Jesus Christ at the center of Christian life and ministry and a tool for bringing disciples of Christ to a deeper relationship with him and with others (151). A rule of life is a useful tool in the spiritual formation process of pastoral leaders in particular because of their roles and responsibilities in ministry.

Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual discipline refers to spiritual exercises that Christians have used through the centuries to grow in their spiritual lives. Richard Foster says the spiritual disciplines are "a means of receiving God's grace and they allow us to place ourselves before God so

He can transform us” (146). Spiritual disciplines are, therefore, a means of abiding in Christ through a systematic and continuous process.

Ministry in Union with Christ

The Christian life and the practice of ministry must be in union with Christ. Dan Cruver, John Piper, Scotty Smith, Richard D. Phillips, and Jason Kovacs concur, “For Christians, the reality of our union with Christ means that we never do anything independently of him” (55). Ministry should flow out of who they are in Christ and not out of what ministers can or should do for Christ in the many pastoral activities of a local church. Consequently, union in ministry is a function of union with Christ.

Independent Churches

Prominent number of independent churches are growing and spreading in many parts of Sri-Lanka today, especially in the North Western province, where I am serving presently. Many of these local assemblies focus mainly on ministerial activities of proclaiming the gospel, wining souls and worshipping the Lord in the Church as their priorities. Timothy J. Peck comments on this nature of ministry:

Members of independent churches actively seek to share this message with their neighbors in a variety of ways, including evangelistic events, church marketing efforts, door-to-door contacts, and social networks. Independent churches often assume that people who do not yet confess Christian faith will be present at their worship services. Some churches ... actually pattern their entire worship experience with such “seekers” in mind.

Distinguishing the origin of independent churches is difficult because of their unique nature of independence, but Bob Griffin commonly traces the origins of the spread of Pentecostalism and independent assemblies throughout the United States and the rest of the world to Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles (136). Now the movement has split into many independent ministries. As a result, many denominations and independent churches

with no central authority or affiliation have mushroomed worldwide, including those in Sri Lanka.

Ministry Intervention

The main concern of this study was to implement a spiritual formation process through developing a rule of life in view of ministry in union with Christ among the fifteen pastors from the independent churches in the northwestern province of Sri Lanka.

One major component of the project was a series of three researcher-developed spiritual formation seminars: the first and second are 2 ½ days in length and the third, three days in length, respectively. They were held at the beginning of August, September, and October 2013. The participants arrived at the retreat site late on Sunday afternoon of the designated weekends. On the Sunday evenings, the participants took time to fellowship in an informal manner. A time of worship, sharing, and prayer concluded the evening.

The format for each of the two full days of the spiritual seminars was similar. The first seminar was different in that the last half-day of the first retreat was reserved specifically to be in the presence of the Lord through the loving acts of Bible study, prayer, and fasting and witness. These disciplines arise from union with God so that the participants start and continue lives and ministries sharing from the true vine and being fruitful for the glory of the Father. The format for each of the two full days of the seminar was similar.

An opening time of personal devotion and corporate worship from 5:30 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. was followed by breakfast. The first session started at 8:00 a.m. with an official welcome followed by an introduction to the program. The corporate time for teaching (8:30 to 10:30 a.m.) was followed by a time of dialogue, debriefing, and sharing about

what God had been teaching during that time. Teatime was at 10:30 a.m., and the group reconvened at 11:00 a.m. for the next session of corporate teaching and dialogue. Lunch was at 1:00 p.m., followed by some free time. The group reconvened at 2:30 for the next session of corporate teaching and dialogue that lasted two hours. The evening break followed with tea and some free time from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. to refresh and get ready for the evening activity from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Evening activities varied from seminar to seminar.

The content of the first spiritual formation seminar was centered on the importance of union and communion with Christ and its intrinsic relationship to life and ministry in staying connected or abiding. Abiding in Christ is the foundation for practice of a rule of life through gracious loving acts of Bible study, prayer, and witness arising from being united to him and in joining and fulfilling his fruitful mission to glorify the Father (see Appendix H). The other two seminars were a continuation and extension of the same topics taught in the first retreat so that the participants clearly understood their position, located and attached to Christ, and experienced and practiced their union in Christ to the highest potential, bearing much fruit, which is the main purpose of their existence on the earth.

Between the spiritual formation seminars, I led participants in an accountability group that met every two weeks for approximately two hours. This group involved sharing of spiritual journeys (recorded in their journals) and accountability for implementation of a personal rule of life developed by each person as taught and guided in the first retreat.

Context of the Study

The Asian continent has witnessed a major surge in church growth and missions. Most of this growth has occurred in China and South Korea. While church growth has been experienced by many church denominations, independent churches, mainly of Pentecostal origin, have seen a rapid increase of growth.

Sri Lanka is a country with 70 percent of its population being Buddhist, 7 percent Islam, 7 percent Hindu, 7 percent Roman Catholics, and 1 percent other Christians (Athyal 176). The 1 percent of other Christians is made up of all Protestant churches, which comprise the majority of independent churches.

This study focused on fifteen pastors from independent churches based in three major cities in the northwestern province of Sri Lanka. The three cities where the fifteen pastors based are Kurunegala, Putlam, and Chilaw.

Methodology

This project used a mixed-method, explanatory research design. I applied pre- and postintervention, auto-evaluative questionnaires and three reflective personal surveys. The questionnaires used for the pretest and posttest were related to the practice of rule of life, which is abiding in Christ through gracious loving acts worship, Bible study, prayer, service and witness in view of ministry in union with Christ. After the third spiritual formation seminar, the results of this inquiry were used for developing and implementing a program for spiritual formation and renewal for pastors on the practice of rule of life, assuring intimate connection to Christ and participation in his ongoing ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of the Father.

A semi-structured interview with the voluntarily selected pastors conducted prior to the first spiritual seminar determined their spiritual disciplines, understanding of rule of life as a tool, and spiritual formation in ministry (see Appendix C).

I assessed the changes in their understanding and practice of rule of life in the perspective of union with Christ and their approach to ministry at various times during the study. These assessments came through the use of a semi-structured interview of each of the pastors approximately three months into the project (see Appendix B). Further, participants were asked to keep journals through this process to summarize their spiritual journeys and the impact of the experience in union with Christ twice during the three months. The content of these journals was shared throughout the course of the project, mostly during the accountability group times. I also took field notes at each meeting and retreat in order to document progress or change in the lives of the participants. I conducted a final interview with the participants at the end of the spiritual retreat to measure changes in their spiritual lives and in their understanding and practice of rule of life in view of union with Christ.

Participants

The self-selected participants for this study were the fifteen pastors from three out of five cities of the northwestern province. The northwestern province consists of the majority of independent churches mainly located in the three major cities selected for this study. Fifteen pastors represent three major cities, five from each. All the selected fifteen pastors were currently leading churches. The reason I chose to work with only fifteen pastors of three major cities was due to the economical and logistical conditions of travelling and the high expenses of receiving a large number of participants in the retreat seminars.

Instrumentation

I used the same questionnaire twice, as a pretest and posttest, to gain information. The pretest was used in the first retreat and before attending the lectures on biblical approach to ministry and practice of rule of life, and the posttest was used in the last retreat. The questionnaire had seventy-six questions related to their understanding and practice of rule of life in view of ministry in union with Christ. For the follow-up, the pastors were asked to apply the instructions and insights gained by the three spiritual formation seminars.

Pre intervention auto-evaluative spiritual practice questionnaire

(PAESPQa). The data from the PAESPQa was used to understand the practice of spiritual disciplines in abiding in Christ and the pastors' view of ministry prior to the seminar, how they had been living their lives in the Lord and doing their ministries in their churches, and how they had developed their devotional time, prayer, Bible study, service and witness in their contexts.

Post intervention auto-evaluative spiritual practice questionnaire

(PAESPQb). The collected data from the posttest evaluated their progress and areas where improvements were made. In addition, it analyzed the outcomes to find the reasons for achievement or failure in the practice that was taught in the seminars.

Semi-structured focus group (SSFG). Two focus group discussions were held before and after the spiritual formation seminar. Two pastors were selected from each of the three cities in the northwestern province of Sri Lanka to participate in a focus group discussion before and after the retreat. The senior pastors from the three cities were the participants selected for the focus group discussions.

Variables

The independent variables of this project were the seminars' teachings on the practice of a rule of life as a tool for spiritual formation based on abiding in Christ in view of ministry in union with Christ during the three retreats. *The dependent variables* were the changes in understanding and practice of rule of life based on abiding in Christ in view of ministry in union with Christ among the pastors of independent churches of the northwestern province in their own context. *Intervening variables* were the geographic and socioeconomic factors such as participants' distance, wealth, health, and authoritative leadership barriers as well as weather, electricity, or lack thereof, and any other unavoidable circumstances.

Data Collection

The data was collected through the pretest, posttest, and three reflective personal interviews. The follow-up included the learning experiences and insights gained during the spiritual retreats combined with the practice of the concepts in their personal and ministry life after the spiritual formation seminars. All the data, including the pretest and posttest completed during the retreats and the two interviews, was kept in individualized folders. In addition, I used an extra form in the follow-up process on which I classified the different areas where the pastors would need to focus in order to be intimately connected to Christ and bear much fruit while participating in his ongoing ministry and completing his mission on earth.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire data collected in the pretest informed the study about the pastors' understanding of spiritual disciplines and practice of rule of life and their model of ministry prior to the seminar. The analysis also provided how they had been living

their spiritual lives and doing their ministries in their churches. In addition, the data revealed the depth of their spiritual lives, how they developed their devotional time, prayer, fasting, Bible study, service, witnessing, and other spiritual practices. The collected data from the posttest provided information where improvements were made. I was able to analyze the outcomes and see the reasons for achievement or failure in the practice taught in the first seminar.

Generalizability

The main goal of this study was to help pastors enhance their spiritual lives through developing a rule of life as a tool for spiritual formation based on abiding in Christ in view of ministry in union with Christ by the loving acts of worship, Bible study, prayer, service and witness. Even though this study was limited to independent pastors of the northwestern province of Sri Lanka, I can generalize the results to other groups of pastors ministering in different contexts or other denominations. As the dynamics of spiritual formation and practice of spiritual disciplines cut across denominations and contexts, the concepts of a rule of life in view of ministry in union with Christ and its implications may become an important equipping tool to anyone with the same need of intimate relationship with Christ participating in his ongoing mission to the uttermost parts of the world.

The northwestern province has the majority of independent churches located in these three major cities selected for this study. All the fifteen participating pastors came from the three major cities in the northwestern province of Sri Lanka. The selected participants are church leaders who pastor congregations.

Theological Foundation

Jesus Christ specified his purpose for ministry when he chose his disciples: “And He appointed twelve to continue to be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach [as apostles or special messengers]” (Mark 3:14, AMP). According to Jesus, ministry comes in union with him. The word know, *ginosko* in the Greek, referred to in Matthew 7:21, is an intimate relationship of union and approval (Fisher 87). Jesus emphasized the importance of a continuing personal relationship with him more than doing spectacular works of ministry in his name.

Reinforcing and reconfirming the same need for intimacy with him after spending “three years teaching, modeling, and training the future leaders” (*Abide* 2: 5), of the church, Jesus told his disciples the parable of the vine found in John 15:1-17. The theme of this metaphor is “best summarized in one statement in John 15:5” (1: 3): “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (NASB). Jesus underscored the necessity of abiding in him for the purpose of carrying out his mission on earth to the glory of his Father.

True ministry arises as a result of intimacy with Christ and as a sign of evidence of abiding in him. Stephen Seamands declares, “[M]inistry then is not so much asking Christ to join us in ministry but participating with Christ in His ongoing ministry as he offers Himself to others through us” (20). God ministers through believers who remain connected to Christ in loving obedience, which is the basis for abiding in him. As the Department of Christian ‘formation of the Evangelical Covenant Church declares, “Learning to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, however, is a life-long process” (5). The result of such a lifelong intimacy is Christ-like life and fruitful service to others.

The issue of conforming to Christ is significant in ministry. Kathy Collard Miller explains the priority of becoming like Christ: “[F]or the Christian, heaven is not a goal; it is a destination. The goal is that ‘Christ be formed in you,’ to use the words of the apostle Paul (Gal. 4:19)” (197). As discussed above, this regular transformation into the full image and likeness of God does not happen spontaneously as it requires intention and discipline.

Dallas Willard aptly sums up this approach of intentionality and discipline required for spiritual formation:

A clear vision of God and of the place he has made for Christians in him enables us to form a strong and clear intention to live in that vision. The clear vision and the concrete intention to obey Christ will naturally lead to seeking out and applying the tools to the completion of supplanting the inner character of the mislaid person with the inner character of Jesus—his vision, indulgence, frame of mind, choices, and character. By finding such tools, disciples are not left to themselves but have a rich example accessible in the pattern and teachings of Jesus and in his people through the ages. (“Living a Transformed Life”)

In Christian tradition the rule of life is the tool used for spiritual formation, emphasizing the vital element of abiding in Christ through spiritual disciplines. David Vryhof agrees: “The purpose of the Rule of Life is to strengthen our abiding in Christ” (20). Many men and women whom God has used powerfully in his ministry, such as St. Benedict, John Wesley and Thomas Merton have employed a rule of life. The gracious covenant, “Abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:4), anchors a rule of life and is a description and prescription of abiding in Christ not through personal efforts but through the means of grace provided by him.

Overview

Chapter 2 of this study explores the biblical and theological context for the study and reviews pertinent literature on ministry in union with Christ based on practice and

experience of rule of life. Chapter 3 outlines in more detail the design and methodology of the project. Chapter 4 reports the significant findings of this study. Chapter 5 offers a summary and the conclusions of the study, including evaluation and interpretation of the findings and provides practical applications for further studies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Introduction

The mission and call to live in union with Jesus Christ are inseparable for his ministers if they want to be fruitful in his ministry for the glory of the Father. Scripture clearly designates that, before the foundation of the world, God made every follower of Christ in union with him for the good deeds and the work of ministry for edifying the church until they all grow in the knowledge of the Son of God and conform to his image (Eph. 1:3-4; 2:10; 4:12-13). Ajith Fernando believes that neglecting the basics of faith causes much ministry failure. Adhering to the basics of faith is the ministers' first priority as they live in union with Christ (14, 45). Ministers who are called of God must therefore see the necessity of establishing constant union with Jesus Christ through the practice of spiritual disciplines, which resulted in a lived daily experience of communion and fellowship with him.

Arthur W. Pink emphasizes the "distinction between status and operational experience by speaking of union and communion as a great design and aim of God in his purpose and dealings with believers" (16). Hence, ministers who have lost sight of the importance and practice of their union with Christ and have replaced it with struggling for accomplishment in their own terms will inevitably result in failure.

Love for Jesus is not produced by spiritual activity, and business in ministry does not guarantee the presence of Christ in that ministry. The minister must be in communion with Christ. Communion consists of a mutual relationship and humanity must respond to God's love (Owen 30). Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis emphasize the urgent need for human response and the mutual relationship in communion with Christ:

Spiritual formation is essentially a continuing response to the reality of God's grace, which shapes believers into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world. (24)

Since the goal of spiritual formation is to shape the minister into the fullness of Christ, being with him is essential for displaying a Christlike life and Christlike ministry in the church as well as the world.

Thus, not being united with Christ and continuing to practice ministry causes life to be dominated by personal perspectives and leads to contradiction and failure in ministry. A strong union with Christ provides disciples with a long-term pattern of growth, as Christ is in them, to conform to his likeness. The purpose of this study was to implement a spiritual formation process through developing a rule of life for pastors of independent churches in the northwestern province of Sri Lanka.

Theological Framework

The majority of problems faced by pastors in ministry are a result of not focusing on union with Christ that then affects their practice of ministry. The practice of rule of life is a useful tool for living a holistic life with an assurance of a fruitful ministry through an intentional behavior that extends from union to communion, and community to crowd, as one abides in Christ.

The theme of union with Christ spreads all throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, and is illustrated in different analogies. One of the parallels is the one Christ himself used in John 15:1-17, the metaphor of the vine and the branches and his final "I am" sayings in the Gospel of John. In the last phrase of chapter 14, Jesus said, "Rise, let us go from here" (v. 31). Up to this point, Jesus was teaching his disciples in the Upper Room; however, from this point on, they walked on their way to the Garden of

Gethsemane. On the way there, Jesus began to teach his disciples, using a gardening metaphor.

The Vine and the Branches—“I am the True Vine”

The phrase *I am* is full of Old Testament connotations. *I am*, was the name God gave Moses to use when speaking about him to the nation of Israel (Exod. 3:13-15), and “Yahweh appears more than 6,800 times in the Old Testament” (Stone 11). Yahweh is God’s personal name as Jesus used the phrase *I am* in reference to himself and identified himself with God. James MacDonald indicates, “*Adonai* speaks of God’s unlimited authority; Yahweh reminds us of His covenant relationship—the intimacy He has with His people” (72). Carl Townsend, providing a helpful explanation on the personal name of God, describes that God chooses to use Yahweh only with his people, and it refers to God giving his heart to his beloved people in order to know him intimately (104).

The text *I am* is also connected with *the true vine*. In the Old Testament, the image of the vine is regularly used to describe God’s covenant people of Israel, and the disciples may not have been amazed by these words of Jesus: “My Father is the Gardener” (John 15:1, NIV). They may have been thinking the words of Isaiah: “The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in” (Isa. 5:7). They may have been aware of the Psalms:

- “Thou broughtest us out into a fruitful place” (Ps. 66:12, KJV), and
- “You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it.

You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land” (Ps. 80:8-11, NIV).

The image of the vine was common in their culture.

Initially, the vineyard of Israel grew and stretched out its branches, but the vineyard produced only bad fruit (Ps. 80:12-16; Isa. 5:2; 7:23; 27:2-6; Jer. 2:21; Ezek.

15:1-5; 17:1-21; 19:10-15). As a result, it was cut down and burned with fire, and the psalmist beseeched God the Vinedresser to return to his vine and restore it through a person at his right hand, “the son of man you have raised up for yourself “ (Ps. 80:17). Stephen Voorwinde points out that Israel who did not bear fruit is primarily an emblem for covenant-breaking Israel (245).

Alternatively, the Old Testament also holds the promise that one day “[a] shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit” (Isa. 11:1). This verse describes the Messianic hope of the Old Testament covenant people, that Israel would be restored through this new branch (Klein 70). In the Old Testament, Israel is the vine and God is regarded as the vinedresser (Isa. 27:2-6).

Jesus introduced a very different role with his disciples in this vine metaphor. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson state, “In contrast to Israel’s failure, Jesus claims to be the ‘true vine,’ bringing forth the fruit Israel failed to produce. Thus Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God, fulfills Israel’s destiny as the true vine of God” (491). Therefore, the words of Jesus, “I am the true vine” (John 15:1a), indicate God’s longing, attentive, and persistent heart and design to restore the intimacy and relationship with his people.

Tim Stafford expounds on God’s special revelation of intimacy with Jesus Christ:

[I]f Moses’ story were the end of the story, we might want to go back to addressing God as Yahweh, the way the psalms do. Most of the time when the psalmist says, “the lord,” the word is “Yahweh” in the original Hebrew. We don’t need to do that because God has given us an even better more personal name Jesus. (30)

Jesus alone is true fulfillment of the covenant role of Israel. He is the source by which all the nations of the world would be blessed. Indeed, Jim and Val Harvey assert, “From the beginning of creation, such personal communion has been his plan” (154). Jesus is the incarnation of living in continuous intimate relationship with God in contrast to the

unfaithfulness and unfruitfulness of covenant Israel, who regularly bore no fruit for the glory of the Father, the Gardener.

James D. Newsome, suggesting another possible meaning for the term *I am*, writes, “God is the one who alone truly exists, who alone truly ‘is,’ and upon whose existence all other persons and things depend for their own existence” (19). Complete submission to Christ is essential for disciples to participate in the ministry assigned to them because branches of the vine belong fully to the vine. The branches must totally depend on the vine for its sustenance. Christ identified his disciples as the branches who would bear the fruit that fed multitudes of people hungry for his grace, while he would be the vine and supply their means of growth and the fruitfulness in their lives and ministry.

Father’s Role in Fruit Production—Nature of Spiritual Formation (vv. 1-2)

The vinedresser is the person in charge who takes care of the vineyard for optimum fruit production. No good fruit grows unless someone proficient cares for the vine. When Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener” (John 15:1), he assured his disciples of his Father’s faithfulness because God fulfilled their messianic hope in Jesus.

God, the owner of the vineyard, did his best to make Israel bear fruit. He longed for good fruit, their loving obedience, righteousness, and justice in response to his love, but they produced bad fruit (Gaventa 326). God (*Adonai*) stands with them, longing for the good fruit providing his only begotten Son (Jesus) for intimacy with him for a boundless harvest.

Israel is the earthly shadow that failed God. Jesus, the true reality, the divine vine and life giver, “stands between the vinedresser and his disciples as a kind of mediator” (Murray, True Vine 8). Judas had already departed from the twelve. Jesus was about to

pour out his life on earth on the cross as he said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24, ASV). In this context, Jesus reminded his disciples about his Father’s role: “He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (John 15:2, NIV). The disciples may have been familiar with the role of the vinedresser. John F. MacArthur points out that once a vine has been planted, the vinedresser has two chief means of maximizing the fruit that grows on the vine. Initially he removes fruitless branches, which take the sap away from the fruit-bearing branches. Then he regularly prunes shoots from the fruit-bearing branches to ensure all the sap is concentrated on bearing the best fruit. He claims that the vinedresser’s whole purpose of pruning is the goodness of the vine and maximum qualitative and quantitative growth (*Gospel* 169). Warren W. Wiersbe points out the implication of the pruning relationship:

[T]he more we abide in Christ the more fruit we bear. The more the father has to prune us so that the quality keeps up with quantity. Left to itself the branch might produce many clusters but they will be inferior in quality. God is glorified by a bigger crop that is also a better crop. (356)

Scholars argue about the Father’s pruning process of taking away, cutting, and casting off of unfruitful branches for burning. However, considering God’s work for his children, raising them with his Son to bear fruit for his glory leaves no room for doubt about his grace towards the branches to bear fruit. Even he is patient for more than three years with Judas, the unfruitful branch.

Vinedressers delight in the harvest of the vine and horticulturalists note that grapevines are only beneficial for fruit bearing; otherwise, they should be burned in order to keep the other branches more fruitful (Mackintosh 796). God, the divine vinedresser, explained to the prophet that the vine is good either for bearing or burning, but not for

building as he pronounced in Ezekiel 15:1-2. Similarly God's servants are required to meet God's expectation as it relates to bearing fruits that can contribute to the advancement of his Kingdom.

Andrew Murray posits, "A vine is planted solely for the sake of its fruit" (Abide in Christ 9). When Jesus spoke about his Father's cutting and pruning of the branches his disciples might have reacted very negatively. However, Jesus' prayer in John 17 to the gardener, the Father, reveals that pruning is for abundant fruit. Wiersbe emphasizes that the pruning process is not something to fear but something that draws his people closer to God (356).

The word fruit is mentioned eight times in the text. Highlighting the Fathers yield for maximum fruit production, Jesus underscores the progression of fruit bearing as one abides in him as follows: "no fruit", "more fruit" and "much fruit" (John 15:2, 5, 8). Verse 16 reveals another definite kind of fruit—lasting fruit. Hence the text simply indicates the degree of fruitfulness of the vine branch from fruit to lasting fruit. These two kinds of fruit reveal the vinedresser's ultimate purpose for the vine and the branches. The Father's ultimate vision is lasting fruit.

Angela Lougee provides an interesting thought on lasting fruit: "One sure way of producing lasting fruit is to ensure that your fruits have seeds in them to produce more fruits, which also have seeds in them to keep the reproduction line going" (180). Commenting on Jesus' example of interceding for lasting fruit (John 17: 15-21), Lougee proposes that in the same way, continuous intercession for everyone down the line is important to stay productive and plant seeds in fertile ground (180).

The intention of Jesus' prayer is intimacy and fruit. Intimacy is compulsory for fruit production. Jesus intimately lived with his disciples, and he prayed that all his

disciples and all the next generation of disciples who accepts God's word must display the same sacrificial love that he demonstrated. The pruning tool is his word of truth. Jesus said to his disciples that they were already clean through his word (John 15:3). The word translated *clean* in that verse is the same word Jesus used in verse 2 to refer to the pruning process. The word of Jesus Christ always cleans the sin out of his disciples' lives to fuel fruitfulness (MacArthur, *Gospel* 170).

Therefore, the *lasting fruit* that Jesus expressed in John 15:16 can be understood in two ways: the inward or the inner growth, which is borne when disciples abide, allowing Christ to form his character in them, and the outward or the outer growth, which is displayed and practiced, allowing Christ to reproduce himself through their lives as they multiply themselves by making disciples by sharing his sacrificial love (Cousins Don 123). Beverly Vos captures the idea:

Discipleship is not something we can accidentally drift towards or into. It is something we must give our full attention to, intentionally determining to make ourselves Jesus' apprentices, no matter what the cost.' Being disciples and making disciples is the core business of Christian ministry. We have Jesus' example to prove it. (2)

God's intention is to use both inner fruit and outer fruit to fulfill his mission for his Church—to make disciples of all nations as the disciples constantly share Christ's love in union with him.

The important truth of the Father's process of *forming Christ* in the disciple and reproducing more Christlike disciples is that it is not an instant activity but a lifelong process. Explaining the practical side of spiritual pruning, MacArthur describes pruning as having the effect of keeping disciples spiritually healthy and productive (*How to Survive in a World* 120). Therefore, every disciple of Christ must understand and have a right perspective on God's process of forming Christ in and through them.

God's love can be achieved and practiced only in union and communion with the Son and under the total care and supervision of the Father. For this reason, the Father's role of pruning is also important in fruit bearing. As Christ's disciples abide in him, they will bear the fruit of a changed life. The life of the vine generates the fruit of the vine. As ministers allow God the Father to form Christ in their lives, remaining in the true vine, they are transformed (changed from the inside out) into the likeness of the vine. Then ministers will begin to think like Christ, pray like him, love as he did. Their character is always growing and changing as they abide, bearing the fruit of values, attitudes, motives, and thoughts that please God and bring him glory.

Therefore, becoming and serving like Christ is a process and also a lifelong journey. Growth always takes time. Foster writes, "Superficiality is the curse of our age. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people" (1). Mulholland goes on to describe just how the body of Christ can be intentional in its development of Christlikeness through exercise of spiritual disciplines, such as Word, prayer, sacrifice, and service, which result in a joyful experience (355). God the Father alone is the source of all spiritual blessings, and Christ is the only way to access them.

Union with Christ, Grafted—Nature of the Minister (v. 3)

The use of the term *abide* is outstanding, but the main focus of the passage is not firstly on disciples abiding in Christ, but on disciples bearing fruit from where they are grafted. Before Jesus even told his disciples to abide in him, he began explaining God's process of making the branches fruitful (John 15:1-2). Throughout the rest of the passage, Jesus stated repetitively that he was the vine and they were the branches. Jesus' constant

use of the words “in me” or “in the vine” (John 15:1-17), seven times throughout the extended metaphor, reminds the disciple from where he or she should get sustenance.

The expression “*in Christ (en Christo, en kyrio, en Christo Iesou, en auto)*” occurs 216 times in the Pauline letters and twenty-six times in the Johannine literature” (Demarest 313). According to Bruce Demarest, “[T]he phrase *en emoi* (“in me”) describes intimate identification of Christ with the believer” (326). Jesus declared that he had made his disciples clean by his Word and the term *already* points to a past, completed action by Christ. D. A. Carson claims, “The cleansing power of the word Jesus has spoken to his disciples, then, is equivalent to the life of the vine pulsating through the branches” (515). Disciples are grafted into the vine so that they may experience the fullness in him and share his fullness in return with God and others.

Therefore, the point of this metaphor is not only to emphasize the importance of abiding in Christ but also to help the disciples to understand that their nature and holy privilege to be vitally attached *in Christ* is what causes fruit bearing. Pink explains the significance of this divine initiation: “[C]ommunion with Christ is unspeakably blessed yet not as great as union, for our union is the foundation of all communion” (10). Simply the whole of disciples’ lives and ministry can be summed up in the central truth of union with Christ.

Christ’s supreme desire for his disciples to know and experience this essential truth of union is observed as he repetitively prayed for the main focus of his high priestly prayer (John 17:23). Christ lives in his disciples, and they in him, and they partake of all his blessings. Wayne Grudem explains the blessings of this union with Christ in a fourfold dimension, starting from God’s eternal plan to be united with his followers before the foundations of the world to an eternal future that includes their perfect

glorification in him: “[W]e are in Christ, Christ is in us, we are like Christ, we are with Christ” (841-42). The true realization that “we are in Christ” means that the same power that is in him is also within his disciple.

Ministers sometimes depend on other *vines* outside Christ. MacArthur alludes to the fact that ministry can be done for parasitic purposes where people look for what ministry can do for them (*John* 49). Jesus still intercedes for those who have missed this truth of union in him through his high priestly prayer. One of the most important things ministers can do is to embrace their new identities and see themselves through Jesus’ eyes (their identity in Christ). With this vine metaphor, Jesus illustrated the most fundamental and basic secret of the Christian life: “you in Me, and I in you” (*John* 14:20, NASB). Every disciple in Christ has been grafted into an intimate relationship with Christ so that each one conforms to his image and share his sacrificial love.

The result of attempting ministry apart from a unity with Christ is failure due to lack of sustenance from the vine. Cross Pointe church sums up this reality perfectly: “The branches have nothing except what they receive from the vine. Christ’s example reveals a picture of total dependence upon his Father to provide all he needs for life and ministry” (*Abide* 1: 5). Christ’s disciples were to emulate that example. God expects all his disciples to bear fruit for him as he has already initiated the foundation for fruitful life and ministry in Jesus Christ the Lord.

Abiding in Christ—The Nature of Christlike Ministry (vv. 4-6)

The main theme of this portion of Scripture is Jesus’ instructions to his disciples on abiding in him. The only thing that Jesus expected from his disciples, at his last moment on earth before his death, was to abide in him. His repetition of the word *abide*, eleven times in the text, indicates the significance of the subject. Jesus shifted his focus

from “in me” (John 14) to “abide in me” (John 15). The latter portion of the Scripture reveals that the reason to abide in him is to continue a Christlike life. Jesus’ ultimate expectation from his disciples was to love each other as he did, to serve each other as he served, displaying a genuine Christlike life and Christlike ministry and multiplication. Jesus clearly pointed out that such life pattern is only possible for his disciples through abiding in him.

Bible scholars call these two stages of *in Christ* and *abide in Christ* union and communion. Union is what Christ did for the disciples in order to be attached to them. Communion is the communication with Christ, which allows all believers to maintain a Christlike life and ministry. Communication is essential, particularly for ministers to complete the work for which they have been ordained and appointed by Christ (John 15:16). The disciples who are united to Christ are entitled to respond to God’s loving embrace.

Pointing out the need for this engagement, Wiersbe provides a helpful explanation of marriage, creating a union, but that union takes daily love and devotion (355). Union with Christ essentially requires a continuing, conscious response to Christ’s charge to abide in him. Observably living out their new status in Christ is an essential feature in the Scripture for Christ followers (Eph. 2:5, 6-7; Gal. 2:20). Therefore, individuals’ experience of communion with Christ can fluctuate depending on their abiding.

Scriptures teach about individual responsibility in response to God’s initiative. Bill Kynes makes the distinction between divine and human responsibility as a divine initiative of a relationship with God through Jesus Christ (2). Union with Christ does not mean loss of individuality. When Paul says, “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20a, NIV), he does not mean a loss of his individuality or human responsibility.

He continues, “The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20b). Christ did not play a pantheistic role with Paul but Christ lived in and through him (Kynes 2). Making the clear distinction between Christ and himself, John the Baptist clearly said he is not Christ; instead, Christ must be increased and he must be decreased (John 1:20). Hence, the minister, though distinct from the personhood of Christ, has the great privilege in sharing Christ’s divine nature.

Kynes offers a comprehensive description on the intimate present reality of this human divine nature found in union with Christ and motivates the disciple to abide in Jesus if transformation is to take place in his life and ministry:

Abiding in Christ is the essence of the promise of the New Covenant—the God who commands his disciples from the outside in the Old Covenant now comes to live within them in the New Covenant. Disciples that trust Christ and depend upon him are like branches that draw on the vitality of the vine to produce good fruit. (2)

The key to disciple’s fruitfulness totally depends on Fathers’ initiative act of grafting the branch into the vine but abiding life does not stop only by proclaiming Christ’s presence in one’s life. Abiding in Christ proclaims Christ’s total presence and reign over ministers’ lives and they have become one with their Lord in thought and action.

Explaining the true nature of disciples abiding life, Benjamin Toh emphasizes, “[A]biding life is not activity without dependency, nor is it inactivity with dependency. Rather, it is activity with dependency simultaneously” (1). Understanding the depths of this divine and human inter dependability, Paul clearly calls disciples to act but in faithful obedience to Gods act in them. Scripture declares, “[C]ontinue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Phil. 2:12-13). God has a divine design by which he is working

in disciples' lives. The father, the vinedresser, has engrafted his ministers into the divine vine, Jesus Christ, so they take their being, identity, and nourishment entirely from him and bear the same fruit that Christ bore. Abiding in Christ means being with Christ in total obedience and growing into his fullness to serve others. Therefore abiding in Christ is a life long journey until as Christ is formed in the disciple. The meaning of the word *abide* itself explains the depths of such abiding.

Menein, translated *abide*, occurs 112 times in the New Testament and 66 times in the Johannine writings (Laney 65). Robert L. Deffinbaugh presents various meanings of the word, *abide*, such as “dwelling places,” “make one’s home,” or “make one’s abode” (450). He concludes that to *abide* in Christ as the True Vine is to “make our home” in him, just as he also “makes His abode” in his people (450). John records that Christ is the climax of God’s dwelling place and has made his home in those who believe in him through grace (John 1:14).

The idea of having God as a dwelling place is found as well in the Old Testament (Ps. 90:1; 91:1, 9-10; 61:3; Prov. 18:10). In the Old Testament, the Tabernacle and the Temple are the two primary places where people of God sought to experience his dwelling in their lives. In the New Testament, Christ’s ministers are placed not in the tabernacle, nor in the temple, but in Christ, the tabernacle among them.

Christ is the safe, secure, and comforting home where God’s servants must stay in order to find all their identity and purpose. He is what makes fellowship possible. He is where rest and peace are found. Christ dwells in the minister who abides in him—in the most holy place, in their hearts, in their innermost places, deep within them. As the ministers become Christ’s friends and they find their complete joy in him. They are no longer servants but are called partners of God’s mission (John 15:7-9).

In order for his disciples to love God fully and all people as Christ did, they need to abide and rest in Christ by faith, cling to his promises, study his Word, continue in conversation with him, and depend on him to bear the fruit of love through him.

Confirming the need for abiding and its consequences, Purves indicates, “We cannot share in Christ’s ministering the things of God to us and human kind to God without careful attention to the disciplines of life and faith that arise from our union with Christ” (Crucifixion 125). This basis provides an understanding for an intrinsic connection between spiritual practices and fruitful ministry, such as personal prayer, Scripture study, and the practice of sharing in Christian community.

The analogy is that a branch is powerless when disconnected from the vine because life flows from the vine into the branches. “Life for the branch is found only in an abiding relationship with Christ. The only source for fruit bearing is the Vine, and the ultimate purpose of existence” (Jackson), is to be a fruitful branch. Union with Christ gives disciples the power to love God, to believe his words, to talk with him and walk with him, and to love each other and witness to the world. This intimate relationship must be the vital focus of every disciple’s life to continue a fruitful mission on earth for the glory of the Father.

The Means of Abiding—Spiritual Disciplines (vv. 7-17)

Jesus explained to his disciples how they could move from theological thought to practical action. First, they must understand and believe their status in him and have personal knowledge of him. In John 15:4-12, Jesus described the continuing, deep, abiding loving relationship with him in response to his love. In return for Christ’s love, his followers share his overflowing love with the world, whether the people with whom

they share are followers of Christ or not. Like any relationship, their relationship with him involves talking to him, listening to him, and spending time with him.

According to John Wesley, spiritual disciplines are instituted means of God's grace. They are means of grace because God sets the stage for humanity to love him and regenerate their spirits by giving them access to him (Mannoia and Thorsen 154). Jesus taught his disciples these same instituted means of grace as a way of communing with him, namely abiding in Christ through living in the Word of God, abiding in Christ through biblical prayer, and abiding in Christ through the community by having fellowship with God's family and witnessing to the world (John 15:4-12).

Therefore, spiritual disciplines are the means by which followers of Christ learn to abide in Christ. The purpose is not to adhere to these spiritual disciplines simply for the sake of legalism; the purpose is to develop an intimate relationship with Christ (Swindoll 53). Quoting Jonathan Edwards, Piper and Taylor concurs, "[T]he purpose of the spiritual disciplines is intimacy with Christ and conformity to Christ" (103). As the minister engages in consistent worship to God, spiritual reading, and Bible study and develops a constant prayer life, he or she is able to do service and witness for him effectively.

Life in Christ is not a checklist of tasks that, if completed, makes followers secure. This relationship must be nurtured and cultivated, and the disciplines provide a process through which it can be achieved. The focus of the relationship is not so much on what they are doing but for whom they are doing it. John Oswalt analyzes this natural analogy of mutual responsibility as follows: "[N]o true relationship is possible unless parties understand each other correctly and unless they have common goals and concerns. So it's with God and us" (97). Abiding in Christ can be viewed the same way.

Therefore, the following spiritual practices allow disciples to spend time with Christ since he is not physically here with them. God's purpose is to develop a loving relationship with each one of his disciples so that they can love and serve others as he did.

Abiding in Christ through personal experiential knowledge and faith in his union. Giving the great commission to his disciples Jesus told them, “[S]urely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Many forget this important promise included in the last words of Jesus commission to his disciples. This promise of Christ's presence in the disciple's life is a great reminder subsequent to his teaching on vine metaphor at his final week with them. Jesus told his disciples that he is with them before they involve in any kind of ministry to him. Even Jesus the Son of Man is called by the Father and made his presence in him prior to any work in the Kingdom (Matt. 3:17). Therefore, Christ loving union and his abiding presence in the believer is the most important truth that must be proclaimed prior to any work of ministry.

Carson, commenting on Jesus' instruction to abide in him, outlines three ways to interpret John 15:4: (1) conditional—“If you remain in me, I will remain in you”; (2) comparison—“Remain in me, as I remain in you”; and, (3) mutual imperative—“Let us both remain in each other”; “Let there be mutual indwelling” (516). George R. Beasley-Murray expounds on Carson's interpretation by commenting that the intended meaning in the text is an assurance and confirmation of Jesus remaining in the disciple before his abiding. Therefore, this understanding of union with Christ is essential as it reminds disciples to act not from their own efforts but through the power of their union with Christ (272).

The Gnostics used the word *knowledge* from the Gospel of John as a system of salvation. According to John, the word *knowledge* is not an intimate, relational word, but the verb *to know* is a very intimate, relational word (Barrett 38). The first priority in ministry is to abide in the experiential knowledge of Jesus in them. In 2 Peter 1:3, Peter encourages all Christians to begin their abundant life proclaiming the knowledge of God in them.

Scripture pronounces, “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Pet. 1:3). Darryl Wooldridge offers a comprehensive description on abiding in the knowledge of God as he writes, “‘Through the knowledge of God,’ is the Greek preposition *dia* and here in the genitive prepositional phrase *dia* indicates to proceed from, passing out from, or the channel; it is the means and instrumentality of the effect ‘knowledge’” (27). He adds, “This is an experiential knowledge. Peter is encouraging the disciples to avail themselves of the means of grace that are, through experiential knowledge of God, nothing less than God’s supply of all things that are needed for godliness” (27). Father’s provision for disciples is the knowledge of his Son Jesus in them and fruitfulness of disciples cannot be separated from that union.

Wooldridge aptly points out the unbreakable union that exists between the knowledge of God and the fruitfulness of the Christians:

Christian spiritual transformation is not something that can be spun solely by the isolated efforts of the disciple. Indeed, this is a danger for anyone desirous of a spiritually transformed life. There may be a tendency to work-up something that looks like transformation that is nothing more than human discipline and works. It may be a strong will parading as transformation. Worse, it may be a dangerous neglect or even disregard of God’s speaking and working in the disciple’s life. Moreover, it can result in self-righteousness. (28)

Disciples' first priority is to love Jesus who already resides in him and with him which is the greatest gift of all that God has given to his people.

Disciples can celebrate Christ's abiding presence in many ways. According to the scriptures the highest honor that a disciple could offer to God through his experiential knowledge of him is Worship (John 4:23). Foster, considers worship as a discipline and declares that "it is an ordered way of acting and having that sets us before God so that He can transform us" (140). Worship is not only praying, singing, praising and dancing. Worship is contemplating and expressing the glorious presence of Christ through enormous expressions that comes from the abiding hearts of the disciples (119). When love for Jesus has first place in people's lives, ministry to others flows freely from that love.

Abiding in Christ through his Word. Ministers must abide in Christ's love because of the new life that he has given them through his sacrificial death. In addition, they become partakers of all his nature through that union. The minister's response to all Christ's blessings is to love him regularly because of Christ's unending love. Jesus did not stop saying abide in his love but he added another step: to abide in his word. One of the significant features of Jesus' statement to abide in his word is that he relates love to keeping his commandments.

The progression of this topic of keeping his commands and abiding in his love flows as follows: John 13:34-35, 14:15, 15:9-12, and 15:17. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus does the same in relating abiding in loving God to keeping God's commandments (Matt. 22:37-40). Jesus' words suggest that abiding in the love of God requires abiding in his word. Love for God is displayed through obedience to him. Jesus said, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands

and remain in his love” (John 15:10). Since love does not originate with the minister but with God, he or she has to be taught how to love. Love is demonstrated through obedience. Obedience to God’s commands means abiding in Christ in a loving obedience.

Jesus also encouraged his disciples with the promise that their prayers would be answered. They bring glory to the Father by being true disciples when abiding in Christ. Interpreting the words of Jesus, Charles Handren says that Jesus made the promise of answering their prayers because his words shape their hearts so that they ask according to his words (87).

Jesus also said, “If you abide in My word [hold fast to My teachings and live in accordance with them], you are truly My disciples. And you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). True disciples are those who hold fast to his teaching, walking with their Lord daily and becoming like him in keeping his commandments, which will shape their lives. A disciple is a disciplined person. John Ortberg defines a true disciple of Jesus in terms of discipline and having a discerning attitude (47). Godly discipline comes as the disciple learns to abide in the Word in faithful obedience.

One of the key subjects of John’s Gospel is the Word *logos*. William Barclay views Jesus as the divine *logos* who came in the flesh. To the Jew, the concept of *logos* meant that God’s plans, supremacy, and assurances were contained in Jesus Christ. Greeks referred to the one who made and passed order to the universe, who continued it in a logical manner, and who came in the flesh to live among men (33). Jesus was the Word made flesh, that is, the Word took on human form and was found as a man (John 1:14). The amplified Bible helps the reader to understand what Jesus really meant as he asked his disciples to abide: “If you live in Me [abide vitally united to Me] and My words

remain in you and continue to live in your hearts, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7, AMP). As Paul said abiding is allowing the words of Christ to dwell richly in the hearts of the believers (Col. 3:16).

In John 15:3, Jesus told the disciples, “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” In verse 7, Jesus again emphasized them about the importance of knowing his Word in order to have an effective prayer life. As Oswalt points out, “[O]bedience to the commands would be means of participating in the holy character of God” (99). For disciples, Praying is a way of adoration and total submission to God, and “His Spirit helps them understand what he is saying through his Word. As they spend time abiding through his Word, they get to know Christ better and begin to understand his heart, his plans, and his purposes” (Abide 2: 5). Abiding life in the Word is the secret of effective and efficient ministry that Christ wants all his ministers to do.

Abiding in Christ through praying in the will of God. Remaining in Christ’s love and abiding in his words helps ministers to pray in harmony with the will of God. God’s desire is that his disciples live a life of prayer based on his will, which helps them to talk, walk and work like Jesus. Jesus said, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7, NIV). The first part of this verse is about abiding in the word. The second part provides the assurance of answered prayer as disciples continue to pray in response to his words. John writes:

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. (1 John 5:14-15)

When the word of God shapes ministers, then the requests they make are things pleasing to Jesus.

Abiding in Christ through the word motivates the disciple to grow in intimacy with Jesus as he continues to talk and walk after God's own heart. As ministers abide in Christ and his word, they learn to pray and practice prayer in a way that glorifies the Father (Murray, *Abide in Christ* 34). In the Vine metaphor Jesus reaffirmed the disciples that when their hearts are devoted to God and his purposes, he will be pleased to answer their prayers and they will bear more fruit for the glory of the Father (John 15:16).

Disciples' life with God is simply a two-way process. Those two ways comprise firstly listening to him and then speaking to him. As one abides in the word, then he learns how to speak with God. Jesus clearly stated the disciples that abiding in his words come prior to prayers. Jacques Ellul explains, "Being in the presence of Jesus and treasuring his words in our hearts is the first step of prayer" (44). Francis Foulkes emphasizes Ellul's link between presence of God and prayer:

The presence of God is always more than all the gifts of God. It is one of the simplest and most basic of prayers as in Romans 15:33, "The God of peace be with all of you." Or, "The Lord be with your spirit" (2 Tim.4:22). (Cf. 'The Grace' in 2 Cor.13:14.) In such a way the Christian can always pray for the realization of the presence of God. It is a prayer for the presence of the Spirit in the whole community of those who believe. It is also a very personal prayer that can be made every day and hour of life and under all circumstances.

The basis for an abiding prayer life begins with Christ's presence and his word in the disciple. In addition, praying in God's will, help the disciple to abide in Christ through the word.

Daniel Jenkins comments on this intrinsic link between abiding in Christ through word and prayer:

The connection between the life of prayer and our reading of the Bible is thus the most intimate possible. The life of prayer cannot be lived unless it is fed upon the Bible and the Bible likewise cannot be properly heard and understood except in the context of prayer. (74)

He further describes, “The Bible has thus to be read in a context of prayer but likewise, prayer without the Bible evaporates. The Bible claims the only conditions upon which man can approach to God” (76). Abiding in the Word brings power to prayer, and constant prayer life in the will of God energizes the disciple to keep his commandments and to love God and others as Christ did.

Those who discipline their lives by abiding in Christ’s word also abide in a quality prayer life which then leads to corporate prayer. David’s abiding prayer life well explains how his personal prayers shape him to pray for the community as he progresses in Psalms. Some parts of his psalms contain individual prayers and in the same time he engages in corporate prayers interceding and encouraging others. In many of his psalms, he also calls others for corporate prayers.

Jesus also encouraged his disciples to involve in private prayers as well as corporate prayers (Matt. 5:6, 18:20). United prayer is not only an act of intercession but also an act of encouragement and help for the community of faith as well as the world. Even Jesus called his disciples to come alone with him and pray as he was preparing him for his death on the cross as Son of man (Matt. 26:36-40). Abiding life of prayer not only unites the disciple with Christ but also results in bringing the community together into God and to be a loving witness to the world.

Abiding in the word and abiding in Christ through prayer transform the disciple’s way of life. They maintain a constant connection with Christ as they understand his will and pray his will. Merrill C. Tenney explains this two-way abiding process: “To remain in Christ and to allow his words to remain in oneself means a conscious acceptance of the authority of his word and a constant contact with him by prayer” (152). Abiding prayer connects disciples relationally with God and others.

Jesus also displayed the unbreakable connection exist between prayer and the practice of ministry, union and communion with the father and ministry to others. Jesus' withdrawal to the mountain, his transfiguration ,and his return to the work of the kingdom provide a solid proof to the importance of an abiding prayer life that effects the personal as well as ministerial transformation. Loren E. Halvorson describes how Jesus intimate prayer life in the Father impacts his practice of ministry:

Christ's time in the desert was certainly not withdrawal from responsible action but the way toward responsible action. His life was literally consumed serving others. The desert was the place where Jesus engaged in the deepest struggle of all. That is where he faced the heart of the matter. The most profoundly private moment was the most public. The actions that followed were determined in that moment apart. (95)

Disciples are called to follow the same abiding and abundant life that Jesus lived on earth and one can fail in ministry if he or she did not learn to abide in Christ through word and prayer and operate from intimate connection with his Lord. Prayer is good, but it is in vain if disciples' prayers do not lead them to serve God in Christ's love. Prayer lives that are not centered on union with Christ lead ministers to burnout. Halvorson shares his own experience regarding the unbreakable union between prayer and work:

There are many times that I have acted without prayer and have regretted it. There are other times when I went off to prayer and wondered later if I should not have acted first. There are times when I pray because I do not know what to do. But there are other times when I pray because I know only too well what I should do. (96)

Abiding in the Word teaches ministers to pray the prayers that are inspired by the Holy Spirit and these inspired prayers cause ministers to stay in line with the will of the Lord and serve others as Christ did.

Abiding in Christ through loving each other (John 15:9-17). The main theme of this portion of Scripture is love. The word *love* occurs eight times. The source of Jesus' love is his abiding in the Father's love. The love Jesus received from the Father

was the love he gave to his disciples. Similarly, the love ministers receive from abiding in Christ is the love they are to share with each other (John 15:9). Jesus explained to his disciples about the Father's twofold love, directing them to love both God as well as his brothers in response to his sacrificial love. He said, "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:12-13). Disciples are called to carry out the same sacrificial love that Jesus demonstrated for them. Wooldridge pointing to Jesus sacrificial love says with clarity as he writes "This is the love to which his disciples are called. The love of God alone can only accomplish such sacrifice. Love so deep, enjoyed by the disciple, sacrifices for God and others. It is not a matter of ought but a matter of being compelled from love" (51). Abiding in Jesus and his commands are the means to intimacy with God as well as others.

John in his first epistle, repeating the same subject on the love of God, emphasizes the impracticality of abiding in the love of God and not abiding in the brotherly love at the same time (1 John 4:19-20). In the next verse, he goes on to say, "And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:21). Jesus' disciples were to keep his commands as Jesus kept his Father's commands. Jesus teaches the disciples that his Father's commandment is twofold that is not only to love God but also to love each other in response to his perfect love.

Loving God and loving the brother is inseparable. Christ's love enables and empowers the disciples to love God and also to love others in return. Commenting on the love passage of John's Epistle, Azabados Ádám gives four important factors regard to love as follows:

1. The love of God manifested in giving Christ and giving us new life enables us to love.
2. Love for God and love for men can never be

separated, they form one double command. 3. Within the double command there is a distinct love for God which is not identical with love for men, but always produces that. 4. There is a priority between love for God and love for men: the former precedes the latter. (11)

The point is that perfect love originates with God. Ministers are called and empowered to live out this perfect love. Jesus also promised his own joy to the disciple who abides in his love. Jesus said, “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11). The book of Hebrews, which writes about the connection among crucifixion, joy, and union with Christ, says, “For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2-3). Paul encourages the co-heirs of Christ to persevere as much as they partake in Christ’s sacrificial love (Rom. 8:16-30).

The apostle Paul is one of the disciples who really understood the importance of loving Christ above everything else and others in response to Christ’s love. His primary pursuit was “to know Christ and the power of his resurrection” (Phil. 3:7-11). He desired to die to his ways of life and spend his life in pursuit of knowing Christ and becoming like him in every way. His joy is to be in union with Christ. This union includes all of Christ’s life, his death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. As ministers follow the same steps of Christ, abiding in his love, they experience joy in Christ. The reward for disciples remaining in Christ is Christ’s resurrected presence forever. Christ’s joy is that his ministers share his life, abiding in his love for all eternity.

Jesus’ use of the words *each other* also teaches believers that God’s plan for his disciples is to “abide in Christ as a community of believers because they need one another. Throughout John 15:1-17, the pronoun *you* is always plural. In addition, Jesus Christ uses the word *branches* and not *branch*. In verse 14, he uses the word *friends*, not

friend. He was addressing his disciples, not as individuals, but as a group united in him” (Jas. 4). Jesus formed his spirituality through a small group of disciples.

Beverly Roberts Gaventa poses challenging questions to the contemporary Christian community about the need for Christian self-identity regarding living as the branches of Christ in the vine. The church would look like different if it embraced corporate life in which each person connected to the vine is rooted in Christ and becomes one of many branches (761). The disciples need to abide both in Christ and with one another. Paul gives a good illustration of a body when he explains and advises the Church to function as Christ’s body not independently of one another but as interdependent on each other (1 Cor. 12:12-26). Disciples union is God’s initiative, but Christ wants his disciples to extend that union from communion to community.

True spirituality does not relate only to Jesus. David Augsburger argues that popular contemporary spirituality is often simply “monopolar,” referring to spirituality as the inner, subjective encounter with one’s own inner self, the uniqueness of the spiritual core that is universally present in all human beings (11). However, such spiritual practice only addresses self. However, “tripolar spirituality” is a spiritual practice that mirrors the triune nature of God in that it draws the inseparable unity of the love of God, love of neighbor, and love of self through the presence of God (11).

Therefore, the community life proposed in the vine metaphor gives a good framework for Christ’s disciples to determine their level of union with Christ in contrast to communion and community in Christ. God has placed his disciples in Christ, not only as individuals but also as a community of faith. For this purpose, he told them to love each other. John R. W. Stott explains, “Christians are not to remain aloof from society where they cannot affect it, but are to become immersed in its life” (*Decisive Issues* 66).

Abiding in Christ through the community of faith requires more than casual contact with them. It needs meaningful connection of their lives with the whole body of Christ according to the grace given to each other.

Abiding in Christ through witnessing the world. After encouraging his disciples to love each other, Jesus said to them, “You are my friends if you do what I command” (15:14). Jesus did not stop with friendship, but he formed a partnership with them as he declared to his disciples, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). Jesus explained the difference between a servant and a friend.

Ministers have the duty to extend their love, not only to the community of faith but also to the uttermost parts of the world, starting from their locality through an abiding life with Christ. Union with Christ does not end with communion and community; it also extends to the crowds. The last verse of the text is another repetition of Jesus’ command to love one another (John 15:17). In the next verse, he starts with teaching them about the world, opposition, and the persecution that is to come on them as they are not from the world but from him. However, Christ’s high priestly prayer gives a clear picture as to why Jesus kept them in the world until he comes again:

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:20-21)

Ministers must extend Christ’s love through intercession and the preaching of the gospel so that the world can experience Christ’s presence and power in their lives and join the family of God united to Christ.

Paul defined his spiritual partnership with Christ in ministry: “I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me” (Col.1: 29). Jesus wanted his disciples to be a loving witness to the world through his loving partnership with them. Methods may be different from minister to minister, such as preaching the word, sharing a personal testimony, displaying Christ’s character, meeting the needs of society, and miraculous healing experience through prayer. However, ministers must understand that their fruitfulness hinges on their abiding in Christ and requires a loving and living witness to the world.

Witness is one of the main themes of the gospel of John (5:31-34). Jesus bore witness to God through his words and works. Christ’s last words to the disciples before his ascension told them to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8). The Great Commission is not optional but an imperative to all who are in union with him. However, Christ’s abiding in his apostles indicates that he wanted his followers to be witnesses of the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20). Luke’s use of the word *mater* for witnesses in Acts 1:8 means those destined to die for the sake of the gospel (Wiersbe, *Bible Commentary* 389). Witnessing is a matter of life and death. Therefore, abiding in Christ through witness is not just sharing the gospel for a moment but also a lifelong journey or discipline in which Christ’s disciples witness to the world as Christ did.

The Divine Model of the Father and the Son in Abiding and Bearing Fruit

Jesus not only taught the disciples how to abide in him but also he himself demonstrated perfectly a life of abiding in union with his Father. His intimacy with his Father was the most important thing to him, even more than his ministry to others. He knew that ministry comes because of that intimate relationship. Jesus’ unique words to his disciples explained the foundation for his ministry: “Don’t you believe that I am in

the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you are not from myself, but the Father who abides in me does his work” (John 14:10). In the immediate context of the vine metaphor, Jesus referred to his Father more than twenty-three times. R. Kent Hughes writes that the four Gospels record Jesus using *Father* more than sixty times (155). This dynamic relationship energizes the ministry of Jesus, which would be unattainable without it.

Out of Jesus’ personal union with his Father come both “his words and his works, which manifest the character of God” (Kynes 1). Jesus explained the Jews about this divine model of the Father and the Son in the fruit bearing process as follows:

Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles that you may learn and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father. (John 10:37-38)

In this text, Jesus was emphasizing the significance of his relationship with the Father in continuing a fruitful life and ministry. Their relationship should be the model for his disciples (Kynes 3).

Jesus cultivated his habits intentionally. Explaining Jesus’ model of exemplary behavior, Reginald Johnson mentions three elements in Jesus’ spirituality. First, his spirituality was nurtured through a small group of disciples. Second, Jesus used the means of grace (spiritual disciplines) to form his spirituality, and he taught by example. Third, as a part of his spirituality, Jesus established regularity of public ministry and private time (151). These three elements of Jesus’s spirituality were vital to his ministry.

Pastors face many challenges if they do not prioritize their lives, and some finally compromise. Jesus had many responsibilities and pressures, yet he lived a life of peace and harmony. He stayed patient, relaxed, joyful, and generous with people even though most of them needed ministry from him. One might say that Jesus was successful because

he was the begotten Son of God. While true, this answer is not complete. Jesus was fully God, but he was also fully man. The historian Luke writes as he is inspired by the Holy Spirit, “Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52), and the author of Hebrews aptly states, “He learned obedience from what he suffered” (Heb. 5:8). Jesus also learned and grew in the context of his relationship of abiding in the Father’s love (John 15:9).

Before the foundations of the world, Jesus was in union with his Father. Ray Anderson captures the inward essence of Jesus’ ministry in union with his Father as being the inner logic of all ministries grounded in the interior relation of mutual love and care between the father and the Son (42). This model “should be the absolute focus of every disciple’s life” (Abide 1: 5) and exactly what Jesus desired to form with them as he appointed his twelve disciples: “And He appointed twelve to continue to be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach [as apostles or special messengers]” (Mark 3:14, AMP). This passage emphasizes the idea of continuing to be in close relationship with Jesus.

The essential purpose of God’s incarnation is that his people be conformed to the image of his Son Jesus Christ. Marshal offers an encouraging comprehensive description on Christ’s entire purpose of incarnation:

Indeed, the whole purpose of Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection was to create a holy nature for you through himself. He imparts this holy nature for you through himself. He imparts this holy nature to you as you live in union and fellowship with him. He did not suffer, die, raise again to enable you to produce a new nature by your own effort! If you could do that, Christ lived, died and rose again in vain. (43)

In order for a ministry to succeed, ministers cannot allow the world and its needs to set the agenda, nor should the minister set the agenda. In John 5:19, Jesus said, “[W]hatever

the Father does the Son also does” (NIV). In verse 30, he repeats this statement: “By myself I can do nothing.” The agenda should be that of the Father alone, given to the minister through the Holy Spirit, by the process of abiding in Christ.

Work of the Holy Spirit in Abiding in Christ

The work of the Holy is critical in abiding in Christ and Jesus makes this clear to his disciples. After telling them about his death on the cross and his departure, the disciples’ hearts were seriously troubled (John 14:1; 16:6, 22). Jesus knew their hearts and assured them that they would not be left alone. Jesus comforted the disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit who would come to walk along with them. Jesus said to them, “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also...” (John 15:26). According to the words of Jesus, he is the first one to help them abide in him, but he speaks about another helper who is going to come and live in them to help them abide in him (John 14). MacArthur explains the uniqueness of the Holy Spirit as well as his unique relationship with the disciple as follows:

The Greek word translated *helper* (*parakletos*) literally means *one who is called alongside*. The King James Version translates it “Comforter,” which is one of its meanings. The Greek word translated *another* may provide a helpful clue in understanding Jesus’ meaning in John 14. Two Greek words are frequently translated *another*—*heteros* and *allos*. , *allos* is the word Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit: ‘another [*allos*] Helper’” (How to Survive in a World 76).

Thus, the Holy Spirit is exactly the same essence that Jesus had. Jesus was, therefore, not giving them another kind of helper. He sent one who is the exact representation of himself and who has the same characteristics, particularly love. Therefore followers of Christ should know that the Holy Spirit as the personal presence of God is not a kind of

force or influential power. The living Christ is a God of power and authority and the present with the disciple through the Holy Spirit (18).

Every function that Jesus performed in the Gospel of John the Holy Spirit also performs in the Gospel of John. They come from the Father, bear witness, teach truth, and dwell in the disciples. The promised Holy Spirit, Who abides in the disciples, is not just similar to Jesus's core attributes, but is like Jesus in action. Jesus' promise for the disciples is that the Holy Spirit will come when "his physical presence is taken away from them. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is Jesus' continuing spiritual presence with his disciples. Hence, the immediate context of the passage concerning *abiding* in Christ and Christ abiding in them and the coming of the Holy Spirit are intimately related. They cannot abide in Christ without abiding in the Spirit" (Wil Pounds). Affirming the intimate relationship of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, Murray says, "If there is no walking in the Spirit, there is no abiding. It's impossible to live the life of full abiding without being full of the Holy Spirit" (*Abide in Christ* 78). Disciples cannot abide in Christ apart from the work of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' discourse on the vine emphasizes fruitfulness in disciples' lives because of abiding in Christ. In Galatians 5, the apostle Paul claims walking by the Spirit is vital for bearing fruit. This equivalent shows that walking by the Holy Spirit and abiding in Christ are the same concepts. John 14:25-26 explains the interconnectedness of Christ and the Holy Spirit in helping disciples in bearing fruit. The role of the Holy Spirit is to teach disciples Christ's heart and remind them of the things Christ taught. The Holy Spirit's primary purpose is to point to Christ.

Robert Dean understands that the Holy Spirit always works in accordance with the Word never contradicts each other (95). Therefore, applying both practical

application and walking with the Holy Spirit is an essential part in ministry. The Holy Spirit fills disciples with the Word of God. Disciples, then, walking by means of the Holy Spirit, apply the Word that transforms thinking and life.

The filling of the Holy Spirit and abiding in Christ implies allowing the Word of God to indwell in his followers richly. John Griffith points out that filling of the Holy Spirit and filling of the Word are tantamount. They cannot be separated from each other, and they both contribute in the transformation process of a believer. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit gives ministers the ability to apply the teaching and the love of Christ to everyday life, leading to wisdom.

The benefits of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, life, and peace. Indeed, Christ himself lived his life while walking in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit (Linzey 80). Jesus asked the disciples to accept the Holy Spirit because he knew they needed him. The first apostles also daily sought the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit just as all his people should. According to Billy Graham, “the Bible tells us, we need the Spirit, to bring fruit into our lives because we cannot produce godliness, apart from the Spirit” (87). Thus, the act of walking in the Spirit together with the study of Scripture is the means of abiding in Christ, which is what causes his disciples to bear good fruit.

The main purpose for walking in fellowship with other believers is for accountability. Having a connection with other disciples helps Christ’s followers to resist temptation and repent of sin. Graham declares that operating the gifts of the Spirit even when they are out of fellowship with the Lord, but they cannot display the fruit of the Spirit all the time when their fellowship with Christ has been interrupted by sin (89). The secret of abiding in Christ is, therefore, obedience.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring about spiritual formation in the disciples' lives. Spiritual formation is the process in which the Holy Spirit shapes lives into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Doreen L. Olson captures this idea: "Christian concerns that process of growth toward wholeness in Christ. It is our continuing journey of being transformed by the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ, experiencing and expressing his love for God and others" (1). Willard offers three ways in which God acts towards the fruitfulness of his people. They are relationships, spiritual disciplines and day to day experiences. Willard calls this structure as "golden triangle" of spiritual formation. Commenting on the disciple's response and Gods involvement in spiritual formation, Willard makes a vital point:

The abundance of God to our lives, our families, and our ministries is not passively received or imposed and does not happen to us by chance. It is claimed and put into action by our active, intelligent pursuit of it. We must seek out ways to live and act in union with the flow of God's Kingdom life that should come through our relationship with Jesus. (*Great Omission* 34)

Willard's point is that spiritual formation is possible only if the disciples abide in Christ through spiritual disciplines as well as The Holy Spirit. Wooldridge compliments

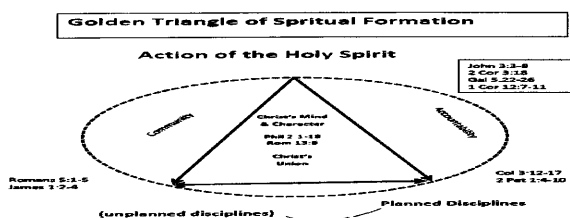
Willard's idea of divine and human corporative work in transformation:

Discipline applies to anything that lifts humanity to higher levels. A person may want to become a teacher, technician, thespian, or theologian. Whatever the field, disciplines of planning, learning, analysis, and application must be exercised in recurring cycles. However, in the spiritual process, God's Spirit empowers and validates these means. It is through this involvement that means of grace are an opening to a relationship with God and attendant spiritual transformation. (48)

The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring about spiritual formation in the disciples' lives and to mold disciples into the likeness of Jesus Christ as they open their lives to relationship with God and others, spiritual exercises and endure in daily trials and temptations.

In John 16:8-11, Jesus mentions three main advantages that they would receive when the Holy Spirit came. Explaining about the three roles of the Holy Spirit, Ed Smith expositis that the first role of the Spirit is to help in understanding everyone's true spiritual condition. Second is to lead them in a sanctifying life, and third is to live a life of accountability, knowing that a judgment is there for everyone. His observation suggests an abiding life in Jesus, which includes disciples' union communion in Christ and their accountability in lives worth living for God's glory.

Willard's spiritual formation triangle could be viewed as a pictorial and practical exposition of Jesus teaching on the Vine metaphor. God the vinedresser made all things possible for his disciples through Christ (the vine), so that they may abide in him. God has given his Holy Spirit, making disciples' abiding even more possible. God's method is to achieve his work within his disciples, permitting the "power, love, and mind of Christ through the Spirit of God at work in their lives" (Great Omission 43), in the context of community of God for the sake of others. Willard's Golden Triangle of Spiritual formation is represented in Figure 4.1.



Source: Willard, *Great Omission* 43.

Figure 2.1. The three-dimensional spiritual formation framework.

Abiding in Christ as the Foundation for Practicing a Rule of Life

The nature of spiritual formation is a lifelong process in which disciples become more like Christ through abiding in him, the true vine. Ministers are grafted into the vine and privileged to share the life of the vine. In addition, the whole purpose of their existence is to bear fruit. They must abide in the life of the vine in order to bear fruit. Spiritual disciplines are means of abiding in Christ. Abiding in Christ always results in fruitful ministry, which delights the heart of the vinedresser. The nature and reality of the fruit producing process is “God is the vinedresser, Christ is the vine, and the disciple is the branch. The Holy Spirit is the sap that flows from Christ through disciples” ((Abide 1: 5), the regenerating work in them, activating their spirits to bear fruit for the glory of the Father.

Christ’s followers must profess and claim their divine position in Christ. Their profession is the first step in living with Christ’s dwelling in them and believing that he lives in them. The second step of abiding in him is allowing his words to dwell in them as the Holy Spirit moves them to his Word, which they study daily and apply to their lives. The life to which Christ calls his disciples to live is a shared life in which they also have a part to play as they walk with him. The Father is always present in the pruning process through his Spirit and the Word in helping them grow into the full measure of his Son day by day. The Holy Spirit also leads them to die to self and live in the Son. By walking steadfastly through this process, they will grow in Christ.

The key is in loving the Lord with all their hearts, with all their souls, and with all their strength in response to Christ’s unending love that motivates them every day. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the Triune God—want everyone in the family to be united in him. However, they must intentionally stay in union with him daily, abiding in his

word and keeping in contact with prayer. Therefore, ministering as a family is a necessary part of the body of Christ when loving and serving each other and witnessing to the world.

Growth is achieved through spiritual disciplines in a structured, intentional, holistic, and constant way, as the Triune God inhabits individuals who willingly offer their whole beings to him for his purposes. The term given by the Christian tradition for such Christ-centered, intentional, intimate, and holistic lifestyle is practice of rule of life. Practicing rule of life is not legalism, nor are followers using a rule to control themselves by their own efforts. Rule of life is more focused on allowing Christ in the disciple's life to lead the way Christ wants. Christ's leadership is an environment where His grace, the love of the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit work together. They teach, correct, and train the people of God in righteousness (Packer and Parrett 78). Rule of life allows more focus and intentionality in aligning disciples' lives in Christ's reign of grace and love within his people. The rule of life is not a way for disciples to approach self-fulfillment or strive for perfection on their own terms. However, Johnson clearly claims that if ministers of God are united in Christ, then rule of life helps them to remain grounded in Christ and grow into the fullness of Christ (13).

Abiding in Christ is intentional, relational, and missional—an ordered structured way of life. Adhering to a rule of life provides Christ's disciples with a tangible means to pursue that intentional relationship with Christ. Christ is the true vine. The vine is the center from which everything grows. The vine is the source of nourishment and life for every branch. As long as the branches remain connected to the vine, they will receive all the nourishment they need to live. Eventually the branches will blossom and, in essence, bear the fruit of a Christlike life and Christlike ministry, which glorify the Father.

Therefore, abiding in Christ and the practice of rule of life are theologically grounded and practically interrelated.

Historical Foundations

Rule of Life, spiritual disciplines, and spiritual formation are not new terms for the church. Rule of life is a practice that leaders of the church as well as believers have used throughout the centuries to grow in their spiritual lives:

Many of the men and women God has used powerfully over the last 2000 years in every Christian tradition have lived according to a rule of life: saints from St Francis of Assisi to Mother Teresa; great leaders from John Wesley to William Booth; great preachers from Charles Finney to Billy Graham; mystics from Teresa of Avilla to Thomas Merton; theologians from Augustine to Bonhoeffer. (Greig)

In the example of such an inspiring list of advocates, amazingly, very few ministers understands what is a Rule of life and as such are not likely to practice it, although it has the potential for personal growth and development in Jesus. Living by a rule of life has helped many great women and men of God to abide in Christ and experience the success of living out Christ's ongoing ministry on earth.

St. Benedict's Rule of Life and His Spiritual Disciplines

One of the great men of God who has been successful in ministry through the discipline of a rule of life is St. Benedict:

[T]hat Ben is Benedict of Nursia,... [who] wrote a rule of life to govern the communities in spiritual formation. The mix of discipline and compassion that characterized Benedict's rule of life has been used as a model for others for fifteen hundred years. (King 152)

St. Benedict's legacy is still being discussed 1,500 years after his death. He has been given such titles as *Father of the West* and *Patron of Europe*. Such a man, whose way of life is still affecting the spiritual formation of Christians, certainly must be amazing.

Thomas Merton describes the depth of Benedict's global impact on monasteries of monks, nuns, and sisters (De Vogue xxv vii).

Hugh Ford commenting on Benedict's rule of life, declares, "The purpose of his Rule was to bring men back to God by the labour of obedience, from whom they had departed by the idleness of disobedience" (1). The rule of life is one of the most essential aspects of Benedict's impact on the Christian world. He taught, through that rule, the very nature of his life and ministry so that "[a]nyone who wishes to know more about his life and character can discover in his Rule exactly what he was like as an abbot, for his life could not have differed from his teaching" (Gregory the Great 11). Interestingly, historical data about Benedict is rare to find (Grün 11).

Perhaps this omission of the personal details of Benedict's life is because he lived it not for himself but for the glory of God alone. Certainly "What stands in the foreground is not the person of Benedict but his" (Grun 11), inner life: "Visible is the result of invisible" (Scharmer 7). Norvene Vest comments on the Benedictine spirituality and his rule of life, as characterized by his loving union with God and its life application (xv).

The Benedictine idea of rule of life endures because it is effective. The rule is effective because it was created around the spiritual practices upon which Christ's own life and ministry were built. Ruth Haley Barton expresses the spiritual practices as involving three key elements of life in God: prayer, study, and work that builds a regular pattern of attitudes, behaviors, and practices that are intended to produce a certain quality of life and character (148). Benedict's rule of life focuses on the three main vows that address the values of stability, obedience, and conversion in addition to the spiritual

practices, such as praying, commitment to work, hospitality to strangers, and spiritual renewal and rest in brief with their implications to present-day ministers (149).

Stability

Benedict's view is that spirituality is not just a private activity but is also formed within community. The Christian life is nothing less than the life of Christ; however, it does not stop in him. In him, his people are connected with each other in Christ and all others outside Christ. Fellowship is the reason he asked the disciples to love each other and witness to the world (De Vogue xxv). Too often, the spiritual lives of Christians become rooted in only one of the parts, to the neglect of others. Followers of Christ have to be very intentional about allowing God to rule over all of these parts of their lives. For Benedict, not only communion but also community was his main concern.

Benedict believed that even outside the monastic order, as ministers of Jesus Christ and his church, his disciples can extend their vow of stability from union to communion and community to the world. Benedict kept his inner value of stability as he died in the midst of his community. He learned this stability from Christ, and it arose through his union with him. Benedict's monastic spirituality was an example "of a whole hearted response to living Christ's call to conversion and union" (Ford). Benedict was clearly able to taste communion with Christ as well as communal life that arose from Christ's union with him.

Conversion

Benedict believes that "conversion is not confined to a one time experience ... [but is] an ongoing process that helps disciples walk continually in the presence of God" ("Rule of Saint Benedict"). Merton describes *conversatio morum* as "the essential monastic vow" (*Monastic Journey* 107). Benedict believed that the life in Christ means

more than the baptismal call. Commenting on Benedict's view of that continuous transformation of a Christ follower, Augustine Roberts describes:

For Benedict, a commitment to this vow allows for a real growth in virtue and grace. It transforms the monk and gives firm expression to the common call all Christians receive at baptism. As such, the vow of *conversatio* is nothing less than a rededication of oneself to live the baptismal call of conversion to its fullness. This commitment is fostered by dedication to prayer, the study of Scripture (*lectio divina*), humility, and recollected silence. (318)

Conversatio morum is the essence of abiding in Christ daily. Spiritual practices such as prayer, studying the Word and other related disciplines help the disciple to place himself in the presence of God for the transformation.

Obedience

To Benedict, the foundational basis for his obedience to the Father was the issue of *conversatio morum*, which was modeled by Jesus Christ himself. In his letter to the Romans, Paul contrasts Adam's disobedience to that of Christ's obedience (Rom. 5:19). Paul further makes the point that salvation came to the world through *conversatio morum* of Christ to the Father's will (1 Cor. 15:21-22). The union of Jesus Christ with the Father was a result of obedience to the Father and should be an example of a disciple's obedience that leads to union with God.

Practices

Benedict's practices are prayer, work, study, hospitality, and renewal. Knowing which practices are needed to continue intentionally abiding in Christ is essential for every believer. The first practice of prayer involves "prayer as part of a faith community, praying the hours, regular times of prayer, times of meditation, and a regular reminder of God's presence through disciplined mindfulness" ("Rule of Saint Benedict"). The second practice of work involves the disciple's approach to neighborhood places, their conduct

in such neighborhood contexts, their work in faith communities, and how they contribute to family life through work. Benedict viewed the balance between the idea of work and the purpose for working as vital for spiritual growth if maintained (“Rule of Saint Benedict”).

The third practice of study includes Scripture reading, reading from wisdom psalms, contemplating the wisdom of others, especially early Church fathers, and studying the classics so that the disciples wisely commit their lives on a regular basis to walk in union and communion with Christ. According to Benedict, study is essential, particularly with Scripture because when disciples know and understand it well, disciples are able to adhere to its truths during times of temptations and trials (Ford 2).

The fourth practice of hospitality included opening up one’s home to strangers and also showing hospitality to those already living in the home. Benedict’s view is that every disciple of Christ should treat a stranger as Christ:

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,[a] you did it to me.” (Matt. 25:35-40)

According to Benedict, treating others as Christ is foundational to Christian life. Benedict believed that loving each other in this way is a form of loving God and respecting community of faith as well as the creation.

The fifth practice of renewal was about the discipline of practicing rest and practicing the presence of God and making time to contemplate and “enjoy beauty, love, thus resulting in renewal in their daily lives” (Ford 3). Renewal is undergirded by the fact

that everything is centered on God including the rules of life of people. The love of Christ and community is the fundamental basis of Benedict's rule of life. It is an open invitation to disciples of Christ to devote themselves to a path grounded in community. It is also a challenge to disciples to abide in Christ's presence and seek God in the present setting: "The three vows of conversion, obedience, and stability are combined with *lectio divina*, prayer, and community to give concrete expression to the life and ministry to which Christ has called all his ministers" (Meninger 12). The rule reminds the disciples to abide in Christ through opening their hearts to his Spirit through his word, prayer, and witness.

John Wesley's Practice of Rule of Life and His Spiritual Disciplines

One of the most important moments of Wesley's life was when he came to know that he was saved and forgiven by grace through Jesus Christ's sacrificial death for him on the cross (Coleman 27). Wesley wrote more than 230 books and six hundred hymns, preached over forty thousand sermons, and led a dynamic revival movement that altered the course of English history. His theological heirs are the Methodists, Holiness-Wesleyans, Pentecostals, and charismatics, who comprise the largest body of Protestant Christians in the world today. Wesley learned that trying to live as a Christian under his own power did not work and found that abiding in the grace of Christ was the key to salvation (Watson 6).

Means of Grace

One of the main themes of Wesley is the grace of God that saves and empowers believers to do the work of Christ in the world. His view is that the balance between grace and works in the life of a Christian dictates that one cannot exist apart from the other. Works without the presence of grace is futile in ministry (Watson 6).

Using Wesley's term "cheap grace," Oswalt states that the problem with cheap grace "is that it does not go far enough. It fails to understand that the goal of God's grace is nothing more than Christlikeness" (45). As Oswalt claims, one of Wesley's main concerns was personal holiness, and he believed that people must be saved from the consequences of their sin. In addition, they must stop committing those sins by the grace of God. Part of Wesley's method for living as committed Christians uses the general rules.

General Rule

The general rules consist of main three disciplines, and people joined the early Methodist societies with a commitment to follow them. The three rules were (1) to do no harm, (2) to do all the good that one can, and (3) to attend upon all the ordinances. By doing no harm, Wesley meant that one cannot progress in the Christian life by doing things that cause separation from the presence of God. The second and third rules provide a summary of what Wesley called the means of grace, including both acts of mercy and acts of piety. The second general rule deals with acts of mercy (outward love for neighbor) and the third deals with acts of piety (close relationship with God; Watson 8).

One of the main features of Wesleyan spirituality was small group accountability. Wesley's first advice for a person who has just accepted Jesus Christ is to place that individual in a small group to be held accountable for growing in faith (Watson 12). Wesley believed that accountability to others is essential in the lives of all believers and accountability initially begins as they start to look after each other and encourage each other in faith, as well as helping to shoulder each other's burdens.

The process that Wesley's rules follow is called spiritual formation. It consists of believers abiding in Christ, acknowledging their position by grace, and moving forward in faithful obedience to bear the fruit of love through works of piety and works of mercy.

Regarding the issue of the theological roots of Pentecostalism, Gary B. McGee claims, "Any study of Pentecostalism must pay close attention ... particularly to the doctrine of Christian perfection taught by John Wesley..." (11). The Wesleyan general rule also made deep contributions to the life of the Pentecostal and charismatic ministers and their work in the Lord. Richard V. Pierard comments, "Pentecostalism is an off shoot of the Holiness movement" (565). However, "the Holiness movement sought to restore what it understood to be New Testament Christianity to the church in the last days in preparation for Christ's return. This preparation led to the movement reforming existing theology to develop what it saw to be the *full* gospel" (Towns). A. B. Simpson's full gospel was essentially about the four roles of Christ as Savior, Baptizer, Healer, and advent King. The full gospel theology set the stage for Pentecostalism (Pierard 565).

One of the differences that church history indicates based on these evaluations is the single shift that took place in the transition—the addition of gifts of the Spirit. Pentecostal charismatics started on the right foundations with fruit and power of the Spirit but have moved to the extreme, focusing mostly on the power of the Spirit without the fruit. Therefore, reclaiming the Wesleyan roots of grace is essential that trained faithful disciples to abide in Christ through the instituted means of grace.

Wesley's practice of rule of life is an example of living a holistic life and an assurance of a fruitful ministry through an intentional behavior that extends from union to communion and community to crowd as one abides in Christ. Like Jesus, his practice was to shape the life of the believers for Christlike life through a small group community

model. To Wesley, prayer was the most important of all the means of grace, and he did not simply pray for the things he wanted. He understood that the true nature of prayer was a sharing conversation with the Father, in which he could have his joy, fear, doubt, pain, and triumph.

Wesley also displayed the importance of Scriptural study. He believed that the careful study of and meditation on Scripture are not only essential for the continued growth of the believer but are also essential for the work of the Holy Spirit in continuing Christ's mission on earth—to bring salvation to the world through the witness of his followers (Cramer).

Wesley also highly valued acts of mercy for his neighbors. Followers of Christ have mercy toward their neighbors and show love; they also receive love and mercy. By being the heart of Christ in someone else's life, they see more clearly the heart that Christ has for them. In their joy, they will bear more fruit for the glory of God, the Father, and the cycle continues.

Ministers of God go through each day following the exemplary life of all these giants who set their minds on Christ and practiced their lives in Christ intentionally and constantly. They understand that they are walking with a person and enjoying him. If they really have that intimate, personal love relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, then that relationship will change everything they do. Their prayers will change because prayer is talking to the person they love. Their habits of Bible study will change because they want to get to know this person better. Their witnessing will change because they want to introduce others to this wonderful person. They want others to know the Christ that they know.

Benedict and Wesley both viewed the rule of life as a tool for shaping their lives in the pattern of Jesus and displayed a deeper relationship with Christ and others. They embraced certain values and practices for their formation in Christ based on the word of God. They submitted to the rule of a stable community of accountability and simplicity in union with their Lord who called himself the true vine for all the generations to come. The author of Hebrews encourages all the present-day disciples: They have run the race with Christ as leader and have passed the baton, leaving behind a great testimony (Heb. 12:1-3).

However, pastors must never lose sight of the fact that the tools are not the ends. They must not forget that they become the kind of Christlike people because Christ is at work in them. As disciples of Jesus Christ, their mission is inseparable from their call to live in union with him.

As Paul says, “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). For Wesley, Benedict, and many others, focusing on Christ is their main goal. Alternatively, God’s means of grace helped them in practicing his presence. They abided in Christ, talked with him, and walked with him as long as they lived on this earth. Spiritual formation and abiding in Christ is a lifelong journey as Christ is formed in the disciple.

The world saw the Christ in them and benefited from Christ’s love, which flowed through them. Still, their seeds of discipleship, multiplication, and mobilization testify and encourage the present generation of Christ followers. They were in a process of forming Christ in them and allowing God to form more disciples through them. One of the tools that benefited them in contributing to the great harvest of the vinedresser was a rule of life.

Pastoral Leadership

Many books discuss pastoral leadership, especially concerning how to lead better, have a more effective ministry, and avoid burnout. This section seeks to outline certain misunderstandings that are commonly expressed on this topic that are not conducive to an effective interpretation of pastoral leadership.

Misunderstandings of Pastoral Leadership

Pastors understand themselves as shepherds, which is essentially good. After his resurrection, Jesus said to Peter in restoring him to the pastorate, “Feed my lambs” (John 21:15). However, misunderstandings of this caretaker image of shepherding have caused ministers to focus on doing all ministry activities by themselves, thus experiencing burnout.

Good leaders must be actively involved in the process of equipping Disciples of Christ to do the work of ministry as opposed to a pastor-centered, pastor-dependent church life. They must use their power to empower those who are with them (Stott, *Christian Leadership* 28).

Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the various gifts God gave to their church in Ephesians 4:11-13 where he shows that the pastoral ministry is one of many ministries in the church, which is the body of Christ. Commenting on pastoral leadership C. Peter Wagner points out the need for a correct understanding of pastoral leadership and boldly declares that the office of the pastor is not the “primary gift in the life of the church but one of the gifts” (*Leading Your Church to Growth* 159). The kind of leading fostered in many independent churches is that the pastor is the primary focus for leadership.

Wagner, based on his church growth research, redefines the effective church growth pastor:

[He or she is] a leader who actively sets goals for a congregation according to the will of God, obtains goal ownership from the people, and sees that each church member is properly motivated and equipped to do his or her part in accomplishing the goals. (*Leading Your Church* 59)

The church actually maintains “a dependence upon the pastor and hinders the maturing of the local body of Christ. Instead, what is required is an understanding that leadership is not focused in one person within the community” (Kuhl 53), but equips saints for the work of the Lord so that the whole body functions together unto the likeness of Christ.

Nature of Pastoral Functions

The nature of pastoral functions is varied and complex. However, these are fundamental aspects of a vital ministry that need not be taken for granted but must be the central focus of a pastor who seeks to display an effective leadership style. The following are the different functions that need consideration.

The importance of love in pastoral leadership. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, loved his own and loved them to the end (John 13:1), and he commanded his disciples to love others as he did (John 15:12). Paul explains the depth of that love in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 13). All other pastoral functions are attached to love. If they love, they will guard, they will guide, they will provide, and they will give themselves for the sheep. Christ’s love cannot be expressed unless leaders share God’s love, which arises from a deep union with Christ through a daily, intentional, and continuous relationship.

The importance of pastoral leadership. Clearly, pastors must also lead and provide guidance to their congregations. A pastoral leader is a person who is able to walk in front of the people, show them the way to follow, and model how things ought to be done. As Stott has points out, “[A person] who goes ahead ... and shows in what manner they must be done” is considered a pastoral leader” (*Christian Leadership* 5). In order for a leader to lead, he or she must have a vision: “Where there is no vision, the people

perish” (Prov. 29:18, KJV). Subsequently, vision is God’s revelation. Revelation comes from earnestly seeking God for his direction through abiding in the Word and prayer. For that reason, a leader looks at the same things and yet is able to see them differently every time.

Pastoral leadership and the importance of guarding. After laboring intensively at Ephesus for three years, Paul, the pastoral leader, warned the elders about keeping watch over themselves and the importance of guarding the flock:

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. (Acts 20:28-32)

Pastoral leaders have to be in constant watch over the spiritual welfare of the flock.

Spiritual dangers are all around, as Paul warned about the savage wolf and roaring lions surrounding the flock everywhere and every day.

Pastoral leadership and the importance of feeding the flock. After the resurrection, Jesus met with his disciples at Galilee and asked Peter three times, “Do you love me?” (John 21:15-17), emphasizing the need for and importance of feeding the sheep. Christ has entrusted pastors with the responsibility of feeding his sheep, but they must feed themselves by spending time in the Word: reading, meditating, interpreting, and applying it if they really want to feed the sheep that God has entrusted to them.

Pastoral leadership and the importance of equipping the disciples. Effective pastoral leaders produce disciples. As they follow Christ, they equip God’s people to be disciples of Christ so that they are able to grow to the stature of Christ with time. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus’ commandment is to go and make disciples of all nations. Therefore, for pastoral leaders, equipping is not an option but is Christ’s Great Commission for the entire church. Henry and Richard Blackaby say, “[L]eaders lead

believers and great leaders lead leaders” (27). No matter what capacity pastoral leaders serve, they must equip others to be, in turn, leaders themselves.

The Vulnerabilities of Pastoral Leadership

Pastoral leaders face numerous threats, perils, and problems in ministry. Sometimes, these problems are beyond anyone’s ability to cope. J. Oswald Sanders lists several vulnerabilities that pastoral leaders face in ministry, such as isolation, frustration, criticism, opposition, rejection, expectation, depression, and pride (153). In setting and keeping appropriate boundaries, and in being openly honest with their congregations, pastoral leaders can avoid many of the symptoms of pastoral burnout.

Willard gives a simple model for pastors to guard their hearts from the hazards of ministry. He calls his model, *Vision, Intention, Means* (VIM), which is a method in which spiritual formation is accomplished simply by focusing on God while pastors learn to submit themselves to his will (*Renovation* 10, 89). Pastoral leadership, therefore, involves aligning the leader’s heart with the Lord’s in the process of forming the leader and thereby building his church.

Contemporary Challenges of Pastoral Leadership

Leaders seek outcomes, but pastoral ministry is more than looking for outcomes. The competitive nature of today’s society, the pressures, and the demands of ministry might force leaders to desire immediate results. However, spiritual things take time to produce lasting effects. Results are always important, but they must be balanced by relationships (Blackaby and Blackaby 103). Therefore, the primary role of a pastoral leader is to build a strong relationship with God and humankind while being accountable to others.

Contemporary leadership emphasizes achieving goals, which is important.

However, goals should not be fulfilled at the expense of personal growth. A plan that God blesses is a plan that results from spiritual disciplines (Sanders 139). Christians spend so much time establishing ministries and services that they fail to agonize over their own spiritual growth. Pastoral leaders should not only spend time organizing but also spend time praying. Praying and planning must be kept in proper balance.

People have standards of what pastoral leaders' lives should be. They will observe their lives to see if their actions confirm their words. People can also tell if their pastoral leaders are able to manage their own lives well. Therefore, pastoral leaders need to understand that character development and attainment of ministry skills should go hand in hand, but all too often; a disconnection exists between these two. To be a successful pastoral leader, one needs both.

Challenges from the Past

The Sri Lankan Protestant church has a proud history of more than five hundred years since Portuguese colonization, which began in 1505. Though the church claims such a history, whether it has fulfilled the task laid upon it still remains unknown (Rienzie Perera 50). Many local churches, which have been planted and implemented all over Sri Lanka, and Protestants, in general, claim that a quantitative, qualitative, and organizational growth has taken place throughout the years. However, "ministry should be judged in terms of faithfulness, not in terms of numbers, because faithfulness is a form of real fruitfulness" (Williams). Faithfulness is one of the *fruits* that God produces in his church. If the church is faithful, it will be fruitful (Warren 55). God requires both faithfulness and fruitfulness.

Rienzie Perera, the Associate General Secretary for Finance and Relations of the Christian Conference of Asia and a priest of the Anglican Church of Sri Lanka, comments on the negative image of the church in Asia:

Because of the negative image of the church due to its close identification with dominant cultures of colonialism, westernization and capitalism, the church in Asia has failed to imitate the life and mission of Jesus the Christ in contemporary history of Asia. In other words, the church has failed either to be or to become the Body of Christ. It is one thing to claim to be the Body of Christ but it is a very different thing to be the Body of Christ. It is also being said that there is a distinctive difference between the Confessional Church and the Confessing Church or between Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis. (52)

In his address, the church of Asia includes the Sri Lankan church as well. Therefore, he suggests that the church must learn to abide in Christ and imitate him in order to regain its identity by focusing on Jesus, the founder of the Church, and on Scripture, specifically on the Gospels and the book of Acts (50-55).

Dr. Saphir Athyal, a retired Indian Orthodox theologian who led the Christian Commitments sector of World Vision International in Asia for many years, emphatically states that nominalism among Christians in Asia is a central problem to its poor response to the gospel, taking it as a set of religious traditions rather than as a living faith (127).

The Protestant church claims that they are the real body of Christ. The Roman Catholic Church professes that they are the body of Christ from the beginning. However, as Purves notes, professing and being are not the same. Picking up where others have left is unwise because “the effectiveness of our ministry and our ability to bear authentic fruit comes only via our union with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit” (*Crucifixion* 65). A new approach must be developed.

Both Athyal and Purves observe the failure of the church in two perspectives, but the true root of the problem of unfruitfulness. Pastoral leaders must manifest the image of

Christ as his ministers and body. Mahatma Gandhi, one of the great Indian revolutionists, popularized this saying in Asia and in other places: “I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians.” His words still challenge Christians to display their Lord’s image as the authentic body of Christ.

Most of the problems in pastoral ministry result from being busy carrying out ministry duties and losing connection with God. Sanders adds, “Without a strong relationship to God, even the most attractive and competent person cannot lead people to God” (20). Otto Scharmer says, “We know a great deal about what leaders do and how they do it. But we know very little about the inner place, the source from which they operate” (7). The loss of connection leads to burnout and fosters an unfruitful ministry. Pastoral leaders have begun to *do* rather than to *abide*.

Foster addresses the same issue and explains that Christians “lack a theology of growth” and that practicing the means of grace would transform struggling believers into the image of Christ (80). Willard once compared this process of spiritual transformation and practice of spiritual disciplines to a “Curriculum in Christlikeness” (*Divine Conspiracy* 311). Calling the practice of rule of life a curriculum is an accurate description of the process.

Need for Restoration to Pastoral Leadership

Pastoral leadership demands hard labor. Pastors know better than anyone else does that they live out their ministry in the midst of many risks and challenges. “The challenge of sustaining faithful service to Jesus Christ and those who seek to follow him” (Woodward), presents a difficulty in terms of abiding in Christ. Throughout the history of the church, various disciplines have sustained the faithful service of pastoral leadership.

St. Benedict, Wesley, and many others clearly see the need to abide in Christ through basic spiritual practices of faith that sustain disciples for the demanding days of ministry.

Temptation is not the same as sin, but opportunities for temptation could be reduced if the focus were to remain on abiding. The last chapter of John's Gospel records Peter's restoration to fellowship with Jesus and to leadership in the early Church. Peter had denied the Lord three times. Consequently, Jesus reinstated Peter three times. Peter would have understood even though he genuinely wanted to love his Master, but loving Jesus was not possible through Peter's own strength.

In reality, "[w]e cannot share in Christ's ministering the things of God to us and human kind to God without careful attention to the disciplines of life and faith that arise from our union with Christ" (Purves, *Crucifixion* 125). God is graciously waiting for his ministers to admit their struggles and repent of their self-sufficiency. Pleading for divine help, and responding to the invitation to practice the presence of God through his means of grace, is the only way for restoration and renewal to occur.

Therefore, pastors need to allow Christ to live his life in and through them in order to obtain victory over sin, power over temptations and all kinds of trials, and anointing for ministry. Paul describes what abiding in Christ truly means (Gal. 2:20). Abiding in Christ proclaims Christ's presence in ministers' lives over every aspect of their personalities. Abiding in Christ means that his followers have brought every thought into captivity to him, and they find their freedom by submitting to his instruction over their lives. Abiding in Christ is remaining in him.

Preparing to Write a Personal Rule of Life

Benedict's life is a great example of how to find the heartbeat of God expressed through both contemplation (life of prayer) and community (life of love). These two

became pillars of Benedict's rule of life (Macchia 62). Stephen A. Macchia further explains the importance that listening and humility have in fruitful Christian living (63). This way of life is an act of love that God requires.

Since abiding in Christ is the means of becoming Christlike, and believers achieve Christlikeness through a rule of life, then a rule of life is the means by which believers may abide in Christ. Therefore, a rule of life essentially becomes a type of loving covenant into which believers enter with God the Father, through Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Believers' living covenant with God is rooted in the promise to abide in him as he abides in them. These words are meant to shape daily thoughts, words, and actions. Furthermore, they are simply a continuation of Christ's commands from the very beginning: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). These words should largely shape Christians' rule of life. God clearly wants to write and bind these words into the hearts, souls, and minds of his people as the cornerstone of a divinely initiated living covenant. Each person's rule of life will look different from each other's. Individuals may choose different disciplines, and they may practice those disciplines in different ways. The rule of life, therefore, is as unique as the person who writes it.

Christ is the example from which his followers should derive their rule of life. In John 15:1-17:

Jesus outlines specifically who the vine, gardener, and branches are for a reason. Each character has a purpose, role, and position in fruit bearing. This metaphor provides little focus on the disciples doing anything except abiding in Christ at all times. The disciples should have a life-receiving intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Intimacy with Jesus Christ should be the absolute focus of every disciple's life. (Abide 2: 5)

Likewise, disciples' personal rule of life must also be discerned and developed within the context of their primary relationships and their spiritual community and lived out in service to others. It must be holistic, including each of the major areas of life.

All who claim to be disciples of Christ must battle against self and society to serve the will of the Father, through the guidance of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. For that reason, a personal rule of life must begin with believers identifying their primary roles and their corresponding relationships. Jesus clearly teaches the way to stay *connected* to him on a daily basis by claiming their position in him, keeping his words, praying in his will, and loving and serving each other as well as witnessing to the world in union with him.

Union—Abiding in Christ through the Personal Experiential Knowledge and Faith in the Union

The nature of ministers is their union with Christ. As the vine branch, they are grafted. Warren W. Wiersbe equals God's initiative to marriage (23). Deepak Chopra points out, "The best reason for marriage is they deeply love each other and dedicate themselves to each other to fulfill a spiritual love and destiny that they could not attain on their own." God has made the first step as the bridegroom, and the Christ follower is the bride. The work of Christ over his bride is one of concern for her happiness and fruitfulness.

For example, husbands and wives perform many duties to take care of each other but the overriding principal is love not that they were given a list of work to perform. Wife is responding to the love of her husband. The marriage covenant is based on love. In the same way, the basis of abiding in Christ is love, the disciples' union with Christ. The

only thing that God delights in bride's life is her loving obedience driven by her personal experiential knowledge and faith in the union with Jesus Christ, the bridegroom. Psalms of David is an wonderful demonstration of that loving obedience towards the Lord who is in union with him and overflow of the joy and gladness God has given to the psalmist as he praise and worship the Lords presence. David had a clear personal experiential knowledge of his union with the Lord. In the same way, disciples of Christ who have a clear vision of their union with the Lord in the new testament must respond to Christ's presence in their lives which is their praise and worship.

The deepest union goes a step further. Paul invites believers, explaining to them what God has done (Rom. 1-11), that they "must present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God, which is their spiritual act of worship" (Rom. 12:1). God's purpose in marriage is to form a complete person out of two incomplete persons (Chopra). God's purpose for his disciples is to form Christlikeness through his perfect Son, growing them to the highest potential in him through intimate relationships. Paul expressed his union with Christ: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Communion with Christ means living in constant, conscious relationship with him as a result of Christ living in them. Christ told his disciples that his word and prayer are the two main actions that will bless them and lead them towards an abiding relationship with him.

Communion—Abiding in Christ through the Word

Reputable research has shown "that few pastors read the Bible devotionally on a regular basis. Many read Scripture as they prepare to preach or teach, but they often neglect listening for God's word personally" (Purves, *The Crucifixion* 63). Apart from

preparation for preaching and teaching, reading Scripture is necessary for personal growth, and studying the Word of God must be done according to a particular plan as reading the Scripture is one of the fundamental steps to stay connected to Christ, the true vine.

Ministers must examine their own Bible-reading habits and think of how much time they make for God to nourish their faith and life. Through Scripture, they must be more faithful and have deepening attentiveness to God's word. Therefore, abiding in the Word is essential for the spiritual life of a pastor.

Communion—Abiding in Christ through Prayer

Prayer is talking to the person who gave his life for the disciple and now lives in him. The discipline of prayer is described as the “opening of the heart to God as to a friend” (White 47). Disciples are called to pray as Christ did—prayers that are inspired by the Holy Spirit. Pastors regularly pray as they minister to others. However, they may not “have a disciplined approach to their personal prayers. In this way, prayer easily becomes a pastoral duty rather than a way of life” (“Pastoral Rule” 1). Through abiding in Christ, ministers bring effectiveness to their prayers; their prayers are changed to those of Christ himself for the Father's will, which ultimately are the prayers that the Father honors and answers.

Community—Abiding in Christ through Loving each other

No one can serve Christ in permanent isolation. In the life of faith, a dynamic motion from isolation to community must be sought. Genuine solitude with God is the foundation to move deeper into the community. This movement toward community is the overarching movement in Scripture. Bruce Dykstra explains the need for human intimacy:

Adam was not complete without Eve. Sin brought isolation from God and from fellow human beings, so Jesus came to restore community with God and with one another (Rom. 5:1-11). Revelation culminates in the picture of perfect community restored (Rev. 21:3-4).

Jesus taught his disciples how to live as a community abiding in him. Thus, Christ is the right pattern, and believers are to love as Christ has loved them.

Kenneth Boa states with clarity as he comments on Nouwen's comprehensive description about Jesus' abiding life in the community as follows:

In a series on "Moving from Solitude to Community to Ministry," Henri Nouwen uses Luke 6:12-19 to illustrate the combination of these three disciplines in the life of our Lord. Jesus spent the night in solitude with God, and in the morning He formed community by gathering His disciples around Him. Then in the afternoon Jesus ministered with His disciples to the physical and spiritual needs of the people who came to hear Him. (75)

Boa suggests, "In the same way, we should imitate this inside-out order that flows from devotion to Christ (solitude), to devotion to the community, to devotion to the gospel (ministry)" (75). Disciple's life in Christ is inseparable from his communal life in the body of Christ. Becoming a better disciple of Christ does not mean only an individual growth because real growth is impossible apart from the body of Christ. Personal development of a disciple and his communal growth are interdependent.

In the Epistles, Paul addresses the Church regarding their love for one another (Rom. 12:10). Believers who are part of a Christian community are called to think of others before thinking of themselves (Phil. 2: 3), forgiving others as Christ forgave them (Col. 3:13), and forsaking personal gain and prestige for the sake of the community (Jas. 5:1-6). Based on this list, believers are intended to have deeply meaningful interaction with one another in mutual love, honor, unity, service, and accountability. The New Testament vision for local church community is one of significant interdependence and loving inter-accountability (Cornell).

Each member of the biblical community received gifts, bestowed by the Spirit of God, for the building up of the community (1 Cor. 7:7; Eph. 4:7). Though gifts can give a sense of self-worth, the purpose is not for self-gratification but to contribute to the community's well-being. Each member of the community has value, no matter what gift or contribution he or she is able to make. The gifts and their use have the underlying assumption that though the church is made up of individual and unique parts, they are all part of one whole unit—the body of Christ.

Jesus prayed the high priestly prayer so that this union should not be broken:

[T]hat all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.... I in them and you in me—so that they may brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:21-23)

He also promised his special presence for such a community. God designed and determined his people to live a community life. Therefore “life of faith is not only an individual affair but also a cooperate affair in the community of faith” (“Lent 2013” 6).

Family is another strong element in the communal life of Israel, so much so that it is considered a living tabernacle by the rabbis. The family is where the law is taught and passed down. More often Independent church discipline “has shaped believers into radical individualists, deceiving them into thinking they do not need anyone else” (“Lent 2013” 6). Jesus said, “For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them” (Matt. 18:20). Christ promised his special presence for such a community of people. Quoting from Nouwen, Jane Rubietta explains that holding people together and showing God's faithful love through them lies at the core of what true community is (120). God exists in tri-unity, a perfect community of fellowship among the Father, the Son, and the

Holy Spirit. When Jesus' followers engage intentional community and fellowship as a practice, they have purposed fellowship with God and one another.

However, this process of loving another and everyone else actually begins with loving and caring for themselves. Randy Jessen points out the vital connection between loving himself and loving his neighbor. One can only truly love his neighbor only if they have learned to love themselves. Biblically, the first area of ministry for which a pastor is responsible is his or her own soul (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 4:14-16). Ministers must address their own spiritual formation before they can serve in a capacity of leadership for others.

Pastors must heed themselves. To heed means "[t]o fasten your attention on something or someone or to apply your mind with strict and close attention to a matter" (Baxter). The one on whom they are to fasten their attention first and foremost is the Lord God who is worthy to receive their love more than anyone else, but after God, they must fasten their attention on their own souls, for Jesus said very clearly, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31). When believers place God first and then address themselves, they have the foundation for biblical community.

These commands establish the foundation for biblical community. Christians are called to love God and to love others in a mutually beneficial way, abiding in him first and then sharing their lives—flowing out from him with one another, then to the whole world for the glory of the Father.

Crowd—Witnessing to the World

Therefore, abiding in Christ through community consists of Jesus, who is the head, but it also consists of the individual self, the family, the church, the neighbors, and the world. The best example of Jesus' intimacy with his disciples "provides the opportunity to encourage and love one another in a deep, meaningful way. Jesus modeled

this type of community with his twelve disciples” (Abide 2: 5), and he said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). John further describes the impossibility of remaining in Christ’s love and at the same time not being a witness to the neighbor as he said, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death” (1 John 3:14). Disciples walk with Christ also indicates a community life that is a manifestation of love of God for the world to know the loving God.

Disciples of Christ modeled their lives displaying Godly love through their communal life being a real witness to the world as one described their example as follows:

their unity of heart and purpose became the foundation of the body of Christ throughout the world. In his last night with the disciples, Jesus emphasized the importance of loving and serving one another not only for each other but also for the sake of a lost world that needs to see what God’s love looks like in action. (Abide 2: 5)

This form of biblical community is abiding in Christ through loving and serving each other and witnessing to the world in union with Christ. Union with Christ is the genesis of the entire transformation process, and cannot be limited to personal transformation, but also flows through to the community and world.

Practice of Rule of Life as a Tool for Spiritual Formation

God has called his followers to bear more fruit. The fruit that God wants his disciples to bear is a life of abundant love. Olson underscores, “Christian formation concerns that process of growth toward wholeness in Christ. It is our continuing journey of being transformed by the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ, experiencing and expressing love for God and others” (1). God has already placed his disciples in Christ

(vine) so that they continue to live a fruitful life, experiencing and expressing that love for God and others.

Therefore, God's vision for his ministers is clear. God's design for his disciples to live such a blessed life is through Jesus Christ. Willard describes, "Now if the vision of this glorious kind of life is there, then the next step is Intention. I must decide that I will live that kind of life" (*Renovation* 1). Someone might argue against the need for another tool when Christ is already the method. Answering this issue, Willard rightly says, "The clear vision and the solid intention to obey Christ will naturally lead to seeking out and applying the means to that end" (2). A perfect revelation of the abode God has made for his disciples empowers them to form a solid and clear intention to live in that vision.

Without exception, Christ is the safe, secure, and comforting home where God's servants must stay in order to find all their identity and purpose. He is what makes fellowship possible. He is where rest and peace are found. Christ dwells in the minister who abides in him—in the most holy place, in their hearts, in their innermost places, deep within them. As the ministers become Christ's friends and they find their complete joy in him. They are no longer servants but are called partners of God's mission (John 15:7-9).

In order for his disciples to love God fully and all people as Christ did, they need to abide and rest in Christ by faith, cling to his promises, study his Word, continue in conversation with him, and depend on him to bear the fruit of love through him. Abiding in Christ is intentional, relational, visional, ordered structured way of life where the practice of rule of life concerns the same. Vryhof rightly captures the idea: "The purpose of the Rule of Life is to strengthen our abiding in Christ by bringing rhythm, discipline, and order to our discipleship. The Rule helps us offer the whole of ourselves to God each day, and keeps us open to God's love and will for us." The kind of relationship a disciple

needs to have with Christ is meant as his abiding in Him. The process of developing this mutually, close relationship with Christ and in return with others is called spiritual formation.

Responding to a Rule of Life

Abiding is always an invitation that requires a response, a call that necessitates an answer. Jesus invitation for his disciples to abide in him, confirms that he wanted his disciple's somewhat more than union alone. Enabling and empowering the disciples through his union Jesus also makes them clear about the means of grace that he has provided them for a life long journey with him. Therefore, emphasizing the disciple's need for an intentional abiding response to Jesus call, Wooldridge rightly points out, "Abiding spiritual transformation takes place, as the disciple answers the instant and continuing call of Jesus in increasing measures" (45). According to Jesus abiding life means love for God and love for man as disciples keep his commandments of love (John 4:15, 21; 14:15).

Responding to a rule of life facilitates disciples "to a place where they live the crucified life in love, a life in which Christ lives in them (Galatians 2:20)" (Wooldridge 45). Macchia explains the entire purpose of responding to a rule of life that facilitates disciple's spiritual formation:

[A] Rule of Life is something to help us live our lives in regular contact with God, welcoming each new day, week, month or year as a new opportunity to love and serve Our Lord and our fellow men and women. (15)

In the life of pastors, each duty must have its proper time and be fulfilled when the time comes, unless something occurs that renders its fulfillment impossible. Without a rule in individuals' lives, duties could be easily neglected and often omitted altogether.

However, every rule needs to have a framework from where to begin. Jessen has comments about his own experience: “As a Christian, the Bible is the rule by which I live and since the Bible is so big, how can I summarize or condense it to serve as a basic rule of life for me?” This question must be answered individually, taking into consideration that the Bible suggests different ways in which people commune with God. Thus, while the framework of the rule of life will remain the same for every Christian who seeks to abide in Christ, the details will be different.

In the vine metaphor of John 15, Jesus explained five specific disciplines to his disciples as means of grace so that they could abide in him. The first is the ministers’ loving faithful obedience, which arises from their union with Christ. Second, a regular reading of God’s Word contributes to growth and spiritual stability. If Christ is to dwell in his people, so must his Word (John 15:7; Col. 3:16). Third, a dependence on God, as expressed through prayer, must be as continual as breathing air. Fourth, loving and serving each other must become the disciples’ lifestyle, and finally, they must be witnesses of the gospel to a perishing world. These five disciplines will enable ministers to give themselves to an integrated pattern of life, which will be grounded in the larger Christian experience.

Writing a Rule of Life

All throughout the Bible God asked his people to write down definite things. He said to Habakkuk, to “Write the vision ... For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it has toward the end.... [W]ait for it; because it will surely come,... but the righteous shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:2-3). This word is not only for Habakkuk but for all of his people because as one writes down his dreams, visions, or goals: “The mind will understand and embrace what it sees.... [T]he fulfillment of it is sure to happen under the

right conditions at the appointed time” (Minnicks). God wants his people to embrace his visions and dreams for them and experience constant growth over time.

One of the reliable institutes conducted a research for graduated students where they were asked to “set clear written goals for their future and made plans to achieve them” (Feinstein). The researcher, based on his findings states that the result was “only 3% had written goals and plans, 13% had goals but they weren’t in writing and 84% had no goals at all” (Feinstein). The same population was interviewed again after ten years and the researcher stated that:

The result was absolutely mind-blowing. The 13% of the class who had goals, but did not write them down was earning twice the amount of the 84% who had no goals. The 3% who had written goals were earning, on average, ten times as much as the other 97% of the class combined. (Feinstein)

Above research data emphasize the importance of developing clear goals for life and writing them down as a key to accomplishment. In the same way writing a personal rule of life is setting ones ultimate goals for his life and focusing to achieve them.

Unfortunately many pastors don’t bother in writing down their goals of life but trying to be fruitful in life and ministry. Another research done on goal setting with 267 students found that “42 percent more likely to achieve goals just by writing them down” (Hyatt). Writing down the goals will benefit a person to live an intentional and focused life.

Michael Hyatt offers five valid reasons emphasizing the need for writing down goals:

1. Because it will force you to clarify what you want, 2. Because it will motivate you to take action, 3. Because it will provide a filter for other opportunities. The more successful you become, 4. Because it will help you overcome resistance. 5. Because it will enable you to see—and celebrate—your progress. Life is hard. It is particularly difficult when you aren’t seeing progress.

A personal rule of life is like a written map that inspires the follower of Christ to fix realistic goals for his life, and then to walk in union with him, intentionally over time in becoming more like him and serving more like him. Some parts of a rule of life may be practiced daily, others weekly, some monthly, while other aspects may be annual events.

Macchia considers that having a personal rule of life is an essential part of Christian life. He then shares his personal experiences and benefits of writing down a personal rule of life as follows:

Rule of life is a framework upon which I hang all the various elements of my life with God. The RoL has often been likened to a trellis, which is a great metaphor; for me, however, it feels more like a spacious bulletin board upon which I can pin up all of the things I would love to do as I walk with the Spirit in my journey toward God. (Macchia 15)

Therefore, writing down his personal rule of life is not optional for a disciple if he is to grow into the fullness of Christ which is the ultimate goal of his life. Keeping the rule in some where he could see it and be reminded of his life one day at a time will submit the disciple to live an intentional and focused life over time. As he constantly walks in the Lord, he could also measure his growth daily and celebrate his successes. Table 2.1 provides a helpful model for developing a rule of life.

Table 2.1. Sample Rule of Life

Nature	Means of Grace—Spiritual Disciplines	Daily Practices	Weekly Practices	Monthly Practices	Yearly Practices
Union—Jesus in me	Proclamation of Personal knowledge & faith in the union (Praise and worship)				
	Living in the Word				
	Bible				
	Reading				
	Studying				
	Practicing				
Communion—Jesus in me and I in Jesus	Other books related to Scripture				
	Praying in the will of God				
	Personal prayers				
	Family prayers				
	Church team prayers				
	Other				
	Loving & serving each other				
	Myself and family				
	Self				
	Family				
	Wife				
	Children				
Community—Jesus and I in the community	Parents				
	Others				
	Church family				
	Discipleship team				
	Believers in local church				
	Believers in other churches				
	Friends				
	Others				
	Witnessing to the world				
	Closest neighbors				
	Village				
Crowd—Jesus and I in the crowd	City				
	District				
	Province				
	Country				
	Beyond				

Conclusion— Practice of Rule of Life as a Tool for Spiritual Formation

The practice of a rule of life as a tool for spiritual formation is the primary concern of this extensive discussion of abiding in Christ through the spiritual disciplines

of living in the Word, praying in faith, and living in the community in view of a ministry embedded and catalyzed in union with Christ.

When ministers fail to understand ministry through union with Christ as a way of sharing in the priesthood of Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit, as Purves says, “[T]he work of the pastor replaces the work of God” (*Reconstructing Pastoral Theology* 6), and everything becomes dependent on the pastor rather than on God. The danger of ministers attempting ministry under their own power is clear because ultimately their ministry will fall upon their shoulders and overwhelm them.

Ministry must be established as a continuation of Christ’s own ministry. Jesus appointed his own disciples to continue the same ministry that he did, in union with him. This understanding of carrying of the same ministry that Christ did, is supported by the content of chapter 15 of the Gospel of John. Jesus talked about the nature of his living in his disciples through the Spirit by using the image of a vine and its branches. This extended Vine metaphor is a part of his last major teaching to his disciples and became the launch point of all future discipleship ministries.

Discipleship involves being with Christ and in the process, becoming like him and serving like him. Christ taught his ultimate desire for the vine branches is to bear much fruit and lasting fruit as disciples abide in him. Abiding life motivates the disciple towards an intentional disciplined life with the Lord in response to his love that extends from union to communion and community to crowd (John 15:1-17).

According to Jesus teaching on Vine metaphor, discipleship and process of Christian formation goes hand in hand. With this understanding of discipleship as Christian formation, it becomes clear that the process of making disciples and forming Christ like people stands at the center of Christ’s mission (John 15:1-17; Math. 28:18-

20). Kirsty DePree, explaining the mutual relationship between discipleship and spiritual formation, declares, “Jesus’ call of discipleship and the curriculum of Christian formation create a sense of expectation of growth and maturation in God’s people.” Spiritual formation leads to an ideal end, with the result of loving God with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength, in addition to loving the neighbor as oneself. Only then can the human self be fully integrated under God (Willard, *Renovation* 4). The essential purpose of the rule is a process in which Christ followers are called to be transformed gradually into his fullness and to overflow from where they are rooted.

Ministers are called and commissioned by Jesus solely for this destination of being conformed to the fullness of Christ. Therefore, Spiritual formation is not an option for Christ’s disciples and they are destined for it. Hence the growth is impossible unless disciples follow Christ’s commandment and loving invitation to abide in him, Wooldridge aptly addresses the issue of disciples need for response as he writes “Without responding to God’s call and provision, spiritual transformation is stunted and one does not participate fully in the development and enjoyment of kingdom living” (25). True disciple “by definition is a disciplined person” (Tittley), who hold fast to his teaching and walking with their Lord daily and becoming like him in keeping his commandments which will shape their lives. Discipline is required if disciples are going to go deeper with God and have fellowship with Him.

Commenting on the purpose of rule of life, Wooldridge says with clarity as he declares “A spiritual rule of life is often cited as a necessary construct for a disciplined life in which to house the practices of spiritual disciplines” (75). As Jesus instructed the disciples, practice of spiritual disciplines in union with him, submit them to “grace of God and through these means the disciple cooperates with the Spirit of God and God’s

desire to transform the disciple from one degree of glory to the next (2 Corinthians 3:18)” (27). The practice of rule of life is a wholehearted dedication and discipline but depends solely on God’s grace and simply a structure in which spiritual formation is facilitated.

Christians need this structure and formation in order to grow properly. “Certainly, all kinds of plants need structure and support in order to grow properly. For instance, tomatoes need stakes, and beans must attach themselves to suspended strings” (Thompson 145). In like manner, “when it comes to spiritual growth, human beings are much like these plants. They need structure and support because if these helps are absent, their spirituality grows only in a disorderly way” (145). Thompson affirms that the type of structure that offers both support and is conducive to growth is called a rule of life (145).

Through the centuries, true disciples of Christ, including St. Benedict, John Wesley, and many more, have proved that adopting a rule of life, has helped them in being with Jesus and becoming more like him for the sake of others. Commenting on the value that Benedict placed on a rule of life and impact of it, Thomas Merton states:

Every continent on the globe has been touched by the Benedictine tradition and by this same Rule of Life for centuries. North America, for instance, has 155 monasteries of monks, nuns, or sisters; Canada, 8; Central America, 15; South America, 104; Africa, 109; Europe, 656; Asia 153, Oceania, 8—as well as 350 Cistercian monasteries worldwide. (viii)

Benedict’s rule of life is not merely a document but Christ’s life that passes from generation to generation. Practice of rule of life has been an invaluable tool for those who really hungered and determined for personal spiritual formation as well as community transformation.

Wesley’s contribution towards a rule of life is also remarkable. Ian Bell emphasizing Wesley’s impact for the society through a general rule rightly posits that

“The value that John Wesley placed on rules of life has inspired Methodists for many generations” (Bell). Bringing out the real life examples of Heroes of faith, Ian Bell aptly points out the importance of practicing a rule of life as a healthy framework for spiritual formation as follows:

Discipleship is concerned with our spiritual formation so, if we are eager to deepen our discipleship, it seems like a good idea to give serious attention to how that process of formation might best be nourished! Some people have found it helpful to develop a rule of life in order to provide a healthy framework within which they can be intentional about their formation as Christian disciples.

History articulates that Preaching and ministering until the day he died at 88; John Wesley lived by his rule, “His theological heirs are the Methodists, Holiness-Wesleyans, Pentecostals, and charismatics, who comprise the largest body of Protestant Christians in the world today” (Bell). As one observes the exemplary life of all these giants who set their minds on Christ and practiced their life in Christ intentionally and constantly, it testifies that “practicing a rule of life is not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end: namely, to live for God with purpose and intention” (Bell), until Christ be formed in all his followers. This understanding of practice of rule of life as a tool for spiritual formation suggests that practice of rule of life is not a onetime event but it’s a life style in the context of solitude and community for the sake of others. Practice of rule of life is a tool that submits disciple to move from union to communion, community to crowd in increasing measures. As all disciples of Christ grow in him and are formed in him, not only the local churches but also the global church unfolds. Above all, the secret of a practice of rule of life rests in the assurance of a life with him where the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit will abide with all his disciples (2 Cor. 13:14).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purpose

Servants of the Lord Jesus Christ have to continue their life and ministry in union with him. Just before his ascension, Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20, but many ignore an important analogous passage in John 15—the comprehensive metaphor of vine. The main idea of this lesson could be best summarized as Jesus said in John 15:5. According to Jesus' words the secret of fruitful life and ministry is linked with disciples' union and communion with him.

If ministry is tied to pastors' relationships with Christ, then many doubt-filled questions and unnecessary problems they face in ministry arise from failing to stay aligned in their position in union with Christ (theology) and not continuing to practice (practicum) where God has placed them. Misunderstandings of pastoral leadership, nature of pastoral functions, pastoral vulnerabilities, and contemporary challenges have tempted disciples to do for Christ rather than to be in the Lord, thus neglecting their own spiritual formation.

These emphases on ministerial activities also have tempted disciples to think of ministry as their own thing. To think “[ministerial activities] are ours to perform is not only hubris but also a recipe for exhaustion and depression in ministry” (Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology* 45). The result of attempting ministry apart from a unity with Christ is disaster because ministers will receive no sustenance from the vine. Purves carefully observes the main problem of pastors' failure in being united to Christ and in ministering as they want:

We have to move away from thinking about ministry and all its attendant strategies, programs and processes and think rather of Christ's ministry in

our place and what it means that we are connected to Him. The form and content of our ministry will then take an explicitly christological content and shape. The change is hard for us because it means that ministry is no longer about us and our skills. It is now about the real presence of Jesus Christ, whenever and wherever in His gracious freedom and love He is Emmanuel, God with us. The actuality of His ministry is what makes our ministries possible. (*Crucifixion* 16)

Therefore, as ministers of Christ they must first grasp, in a practical way, “that Christ is always with them, and then they must learn to abide in that relationship” (Abide 2:5) through the means of grace if they are to continue. The means of grace are simply spiritual disciplines that disciples must follow in an intentional and ordered manner.

Practicing the means of grace helps disciples keep in contact with Jesus who is already present in them through union, and they will discover God’s transforming work in and through them. “As he transforms disciples’ lives to look more like Christ, their lives will bear the fruit Christ’s” (Abide 2: 5), life bore. Their lives will be filled with God’s love, and the outflowing of that life results in love for each other as Christ loved and demonstration of that love towards the world as witnesses. Then, they “will find themselves free from trying to do what makes them feel Christlike and instead being who God created them to be” (Abide 2: 5). This transforming work of being conformed to Christlikeness is a process, not an instant event or activity. Barton explains that the nature of this transformation of being conformed to the fullness of Christ could be likened to a practice of a rule of life:

Christian tradition has a name for the structure that enables us to say yes to the process of spiritual transformation day in and day out. It is called a rule of Life. A rule of life seeks to respond to two questions: Who do I want to be? How do I want to live? Actually, it seeks to address the interplay between these two questions: How do I want to live so I can be who I want to be? (147)

The rule of life allows disciples to follow through those spiritual disciplines in such a way that is meaningful to their lives and allows them to determine how to be in union with Christ.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the changes in the level of spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and personal understanding of a rule of life among the pastors of the independent churches of the northwestern province of Sri Lanka who participated in three spiritual formation seminars.

Research Questions and/or Hypotheses

Three research questions guided the data collection for this study.

Research Question #1

What was the level of spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and personal understanding of a rule of life among the pastors of the independent churches of the northwestern province of Sri Lanka prior to the spiritual formation seminar?

The goal of this research question was to determine the pastors' current understanding of ministry in general and their own level of understanding and practice of a rule of life as a way for abiding in Christ and spiritual formation as well as their current perspective on pastoral ministry. Even though they may not have known the technical term *rule of life*, they may have had some kind of formal or informal way of practicing spiritual disciplines in maintaining an intimate relationship with the Lord prior to the seminar.

I gave the pretest questionnaire (see Appendix D) on the day prior to the first spiritual formation seminar at preproject event (see Appendix E) to gather information about pastors' level of practicing spiritual disciplines in being with the Lord and understanding of a practice of rule of life as a tool for their spiritual formation and how

they were involved in Christ's ministry. This survey followed a Likert-scale format and rating system.

Research Question #2

What was the level of spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and personal understanding of a rule of life among the pastors of the independent churches of the northwestern province of Sri Lanka after attending the spiritual formation seminar?

The aim of this research question was to bring awareness and understanding to the pastors about their absolute need to be in the Lord as their first priority in ministry because of Christ already in them (union) and a proper foundation for implementation of a rule of life in abiding in Christ. It was also intended to challenge the pastors to find their true identity with Christ in ministry and experience their real position, continuing to abide in him through the proclamation of personal knowledge of their union in the Lord, studying the word, having an answered prayer life, loving each other, and witnessing the world respectively. It also challenged them to participate in his ongoing ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of the Father.

The same researcher-designed questionnaire was given out to the pastors at the end of the last spiritual formation seminar and at the end of last accountability group meeting (see Appendixes B and K) as a posttest. This question determined how the changes in the clear understanding of ministry (ministry in union with Christ) and abiding in Christ as a proper foundation for implementation of a rule of life as a tool for spiritual formation would definitely results in fruitful life and ministry in the Lord and the unbreakable union that exists between intimacy with Christ and the practice of ministry.

Research Question #3

What aspects of the three spiritual formation seminars had the most impact on the pastors in understanding spiritual disciplines and practice of a rule of life in view of union with Christ as a tool for spiritual formation?

Through the reflective personal surveys (see Appendix M), accountability group meetings (see Appendix L), ongoing observations during and after the spiritual formation seminars and posttests, I obtained spontaneous signs as to which elements of the program were most effective to the pastors' understanding and practice of a rule of life as a tool for their spiritual formation and fruitful ministry.

I sent the reflective personal follow-up survey within one week after each spiritual formation seminar was ended (see Appendixes B and M). The follow-up survey was held as a questionnaire circulated by e-mail or postal mail due to the difficulty of doing personal interviews all over the northwestern province of Sri Lanka, which would have caused great cost, and also due to time constraints. Six questions comprised the reflective follow-up survey, which addressed the specific elements of the overall spiritual formation program that were most cooperative in bringing about the changes in pastors' intimacy with Christ and practice of ministry.

Population and Participants

The fifteen participants for this study came from the three major cities of the northwestern province: Kurunagala, Chilaw, and Putlam. The northwestern province is made up of two districts, namely Putlam and Kurunagala (see Appendix N). Fifteen pastors represented those three major cities with five participants from each. These pastors were selected voluntarily and all were pastoring a church. The reason I chose to work only with fifteen pastors from these three major cities was due to the economical

and logistical conditions of traveling and the high expense of receiving a large number of participants in the spiritual formation seminars.

All participants in this study were pastors currently involved in the local church ministry and all were self-selected. An initial invitation letter was sent out by e-mail and postal mail through the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL) to all pastors in the northwestern province, informing them of the purpose and nature of the overall project (see Appendix A). The NCEASL was found in 1952 with the vision of serving the national church. The membership of the Alliance consists of all nine Protestant denominations present in the Island. In addition, most of the independent church pastors in the northwestern province are affiliated to the Alliance, encouraged and equipped in many ways to help them in transforming the nation through the ministry of the local church.

I explained the purpose of the study and included the commitments and expectations both the participants and I had towards the program. Participants completed the covenant form voluntarily if they were really interested in journeying through a spiritual formation experience and transformation (see Appendix A). This approach helped me identify and chose only those pastors who were deeply desired and hungered for a spiritual formation and renewal to restore their ministries to flow out of their union with Christ rather than what they can do for Christ.

The pastors ranged in age from 26-52 and have been in ministry from five to twenty years. All were married men. All were located in close proximity in the northwestern province, and geographical proximity was a key factor in the selection of the participants as the spiritual formation seminars were held in three stages with three accountability group meetings in the same conference location.

Design of the Study

This research project was designed with the conviction that a clear biblical view on ministry (ministry in union with Christ) and a proper foundation to be united in the Lord in an intentional and structured way of practicing spiritual disciplines (practice of rule of life) would have a constructive and life-transformation effect on the spiritual lives of the pastors, as well as on their approach to ministry. I used a triangulated, explanatory, mixed-method design based on three auto-evaluation surveys. One survey was a pretest and two were posttests. I also used a preproject survey, three spiritual formation seminars, three reflective follow-up surveys, and three accountability group meetings. Collecting data at the same time with a variety of assessment tools, I gained a broader and deeper view of the participants' growth as they involved themselves in the seminars and focus groups. Tim Sensing affirms that multiple data collection designed to measure a single concept and such cross checking would provide the most reliable and comprehensive data in order to have a wider and deeper perspective and insight of the participants (72-74).

Instrumentation

The following instruments provided data for the research.

Preproject survey. Two weeks prior to the first spiritual formation seminar, a preproject survey was sent to the selected pastors to impress and remind them kindly about the first spiritual formation seminar. The purpose was to gather some general information about the participants and have some idea about their level of understanding and practice of rule of life in view of ministry in union with Christ. The survey also gauged their reasons for wanting to be a part of this experience (see Appendix D).

Pre-auto-evaluative questionnaire. All pastors were gathered to the scheduled location in the evening on the day prior to the first spiritual formation seminar (see Appendix E). Each and every pastor was warmly welcomes as they entered the location with a thank-you card that included the words of Jesus in John 15:16: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.” Then everyone was guided to their pre-allocated rooms after the registration and filling the covenant form (see Appendix F). They were given a refreshing time of relaxed dialogue with each other to get ready in every way for the preproject event the first night (see Appendix E).

The pastors gathered in the conference room by 7:00 p.m., and I started the inauguration with the participation of a chief guest for the event followed by a time of worship, consecrating the whole process to Jesus Christ. I opened the platform for the chief guest to bless the pastors with Scripture, “Lets rise and go” (John 14:31) following Jesus invitation to his disciples.

Finally, I explained the purpose of the spiritual formation seminar and shared everyone’s expectations for the project. A researcher-designed questionnaire was then given out to the pastors to be applied as the pretest (see Appendix E). I developed the questionnaire based on the research questions and the contents of Chapter 2 related to ministry in union with Christ and abiding in him as a foundation for practice of a rule of life, which could then serve as a tool for spiritual formation. The questionnaire followed the arrangement of a Likert-scale format with the survey ranging from 1-4: 1—strongly disagree; 2—disagree; 3—agree; and, 4—strongly agree.

A total of seventy-six statements were developed for the questionnaire, and it was given prior to the spiritual formation program as a pretest. The questionnaire divided into different parts—the pattern and practice of spiritual disciplines of abiding in Christ (practice of rule of life) and ministry in union with Christ. The topical divisions were not shown on the questionnaire sheet. Thirty-eight questions lead to pastors' understanding of ministry with the other thirty-eight questions related to the understanding and practice of rule of life. All of the questions were mixed together. The time allotted for the questionnaires was one hour.

Spiritual formation seminars. The spiritual formation seminars were designed to offer the pastors a clear vision on ministry in union with Christ based on Jesus' teaching of the vine metaphor and abiding in Christ as a foundation for practice of a rule of life as a tool for their spiritual formation and fruitful ministry. The seminars took place at the Ape-Kadalla, campsite located in North Western Province where most of the leadership seminars being conducted, and the first two retreats lasted two days and the third three days. The three seminars were held in August, September, and October 2013 (see Appendixes I, J, and K).

As the ministry is inseparable from the call to live in union with Christ, the starting point of the spiritual formation retreat focused on two main divine principles based on Jesus' teaching of the vine metaphor. First is the participants' union with Christ as God's initiative for ministry (theology of ministry), and, second is obedience to his call to abide in him through the practices of personal knowledge of union with him, word, and prayer, loving each other and witnessing the world (practice of rule of life and ministry).

The conference teachings were focused on ministers' unbreakable union between intimacy with Christ through spiritual disciplines and practice of ministry in union with

him (see Appendix H). I was the main resource person involved in the modules and one research assistant engaged in directing the workshops when each core session was finished. The teaching was delivered through lectures, PowerPoint, video presentations, and group discussions. Three spiritual seminars included twenty-seven modules divided into one or two-hour time slots. The curriculum was based on Jesus' teaching of the vine metaphor and other related materials in which he provided his disciples the divine foundation and model for a fruitful life and ministry that glorify God as they remain in him through union, communion, community, and crowd.

Construction of a personal rule of life and accountability groups.

Construction of a personal rule of life and the formation of accountability groups were researcher-designed and developed key instruments. Development of a personal rule was based on life and teaching of Jesus that helped the participants focus on the pattern of practice and discipline and also allowed the working of God through a covenantal guide in which they are shaped to the image of Christ for fruitful life and ministry in union with him.

A personal rule of life. The main purpose of the teachings and learning outcomes of the spiritual formation seminars was to offer the participants a clear biblical view on the nature of the minister (engrafted to the vine) and on the function of ministry (abiding in the Vine). The seminars also provided a proper foundation to be united in the Lord biblically in an intentional and structured way of practicing spiritual disciplines (abiding in Christ through practice of rule of life). The seminars assisted participants so that they understood the role and importance of being united into Christ and earnestly engaging in seeking God for developing their own spiritual lives and for experiencing an effective fruitful life and ministry.

The pastors learned that an unbreakable union exists between intimacy with Christ and practice of ministry and also that the rule of life is one of the best means for abiding in Christ as a tool for their spiritual formation. They learned five specific spiritual disciplines to which Jesus was calling them to implement based on his words in John 15:1-16, that is through the proclamation of personal knowledge of their union in the Lord, studying the word, praying in the will of God, loving each other, and witnessing the world respectively (see Appendix O). Based on Jesus' teaching of such a model and pattern for practicing spiritual disciplines, pastors were asked to develop a personal rule of life as a tool for their spiritual formation.

Participants also became more flexible in responding and creating their personal rule because people choose different approaches to practicing disciplines based on their character and life context. For instance, every pastor should pray, study the word, love and serve each other, and witness the world, but the methods and approach to such practices may vary from person to person. Thomas à Kempis writes, "All cannot use the same kind of spiritual exercises, but one suits this person, and another that. Different devotions are suited also to the seasons [of life]...." (37). In addition, pastors were given the instructions always to remember their main goal in choosing such spiritual practices or to explain how "their rule contributes towards the goal of their spiritual formation, namely, being conformed to the image of Christ for loving and serving others" ("Instructions for Developing" 1), as Christ did. Pastors were given more time in constructing their personal rule as it requires significant thinking and God's wisdom so that they will obtain an intentionally focused discipline in reaching the goals and fulfilling God's vision.

The International Leadership Institute (ILI) team states with clarity, “Leaders who practice disciplined goal setting, experience greater effectiveness and satisfaction in their work” (ILI Leadership conference Material 21-22). They recommend six practical steps in goal setting. The process of goal setting always becomes easier and more effective and efficient as the leader understood God’s vision clearly (22).

I adapted these six guiding principles to set daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly goals in respect to five spiritual practices that shaped participants towards the main goal, Christ formed in them for the sake of others. The six guiding principles are as follows:

1. Write down your vision.
2. Pray James 1:5. We need God’s wisdom in our entire goal setting process. This step should be a continuous discipline in the leader’s life.
3. Write a list of tasks you need to do in order to accomplish the vision.
4. Focus and Prioritize.
5. Write SMART goals. Make the most important items on your list specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-targeted goals. .
6. Develop a list of action steps to accomplish each of the goals. Break each goal down into smaller tasks with shorter deadlines by answering the following questions:
 - What tasks must I do in the first year of my goal period?
 - What must I do in the next month in order to accomplish the tasks I listed for the first year?
 - What must I do in the next week in order to accomplish the tasks I listed on the previous question (next month)?
 - What must I do tomorrow in order to accomplish the tasks I listed on the previous question (next week)? (ILI National Leadership Conference Material 21-22)

I adapted these guidelines in facilitating the pastors to develop their personal rule along with the sample goal-setting sheet (see Appendix O). They were asked to use one page in writing their whole rule and to be creative in the frame work based on the four areas tied to life and ministry namely union, communion, community, and crowd as they learned from Jesus’ teaching of vine metaphor.

Accountability groups. Once the pastors have finished writing their personal rule of life, the accountability groups were formed on the last session of the final day of the

first spiritual formation seminar in implementing the practice of rule of life. Fifteen participants were formed into three accountability groups based on the age limits so that the purpose of the accountability groups are met with clarity as they continue to function as contemporaries and colleagues. I also understood that age limit was the only indicator to divide the large group because it was the best alternative at that moment. Each group had a leader appointed for one month and a new leader was appointed monthly as the spiritual formation progressed.

Once the groups were formed and the leaders appointed, each pastor was asked to share a copy, with their respective group holding them accountable and reading and signing their group covenant, which explained how the group would work as they proceeded (see Appendix G). I established an accountability group with several purposes in mind. As the group was formed, each and every pastor kept accountable to walk according to an affirmed truth. They clearly learned and understood that meeting God's intended purposes is not optional, but essential. Therefore, every member is not only impressed but also became obliged to follow the truth and submit every part of life to God's will if they want to survive and excel in ministry.

As each pastor constantly offered his life to Christ, he grew their character and they matured in their journey with Christ. As God has formed the followers of Christ to function as a community, the group also acted as a helpful model in encouraging each other in the right direction because anybody cannot grow independently. Helping each other in this process also helped the members to learn from each other, and they became open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as they grew deeper in their personal relationships. Openness helped the members to enter into the dark areas of lives where they needed each other's intercessory prayers and mutual help to overcome temptations of life and

ministry. Prior to the monthly accountability group meetings, the members were given the permission to communicate and help in whatever way they could in prayer so that they built strong friendships among them as they grew in Christ individually as well as a community, loving and serving each other. The leader had the authority to guide the group in the right direction in making sure that each member followed the covenant in faithful obedience.

Subsequent to the questionnaire and survey, accountability group meetings were held with the pastors with a gap of approximately one month. The first two accountability group meetings were held on the day prior to the second and third spiritual formation seminars as the pastors arrived at the conference center for the regular seminars. The last accountability group meeting was held on 4 November 2013, one month subsequent to the third spiritual formation seminar (see Appendix L).

The group meetings continued for 1½ hours each, and the participants were asked to bring their recorded journals and goal sheets along with them as they attended the meetings. Each pastor was provided with a daily, weekly, and monthly goal sheet template (see Appendix O). Each accountability group meeting had two rounds of discussion. First the group reported their success and failures concerning last four week's goals. The second round is a review of goals (if necessary) set for the next four weeks.

Each pastor was given instructions to avoid the temptation of being task oriented when reaching goals and instead to be purposeful as a disciple must also take the initial step for God to work in his life. William D. Watkins quoting from Willard explains this individual initiative:

The disciplines are activities of the mind and body purposefully undertaken to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order.... Once the individual has through

divine initiative become alive to God and His Kingdom, the extent of integration of his or her total being into that Kingdom order significantly depends upon the individual's initiative. (23)

The group was also allowed for constructive critical discussion since the whole purpose of the covenant group was to help each and every one to move with God's purpose and direction to life and ministry.

I facilitated the three groups as a mediator, assisting the group in overall discussion towards their spiritual formation. I also sent a schedule for the accountability group to make them come prepared to have a quality time of sharing and interaction during the group discussions (see Appendix I) along with the follow-up survey. The meeting agenda, goal sheets, and recorded journals facilitated the accountability group meetings.

Pastors shared their personal experiences in practicing their personal rule of life, their difficulties, their failures, their triumphs, as well as trials and temptations in their journey with the Lord and practice of ministry as recorded in the journals. Personal sharing in the group also revealed their level of commitment and faithfulness to the personal rule of life and how much they understood the unbreakable union that exists between life in the Lord and practice of fruitful ministry. They also recognized the importance of having a personal rule of life as a tool for their spiritual formation and transformation.

Reflective personal follow-up survey. In order to guide, reflect, inspire, furnish, and empower the participants further, I sent the follow-up survey within one week after each spiritual formation retreat ended. The follow-up survey was a questionnaire circulated by e-mail or postal mail due to the difficulty of doing personal interviews all

over the northwestern province of Sri Lanka, which would have caused great cost, and also due to time limitations.

This survey contained seven questions and addressed the specific elements of the overall program that were most beneficial in bringing about the changes in the participants' spiritual life and ministry by practicing the rule of life as a tool for their spiritual formation (see Appendix M). I applied the survey so that the participants could evaluate themselves as to how the spiritual formation seminars helped them improve their intimate relationship with the Lord and move and align them with his mission on earth, not doing their own work, but becoming a part of his work and bringing glory to the Father, being fruitful. The pastors submitted their responses to update me concerning their state and improvement one week prior to the accountability group meeting.

The three follow-up surveys helped to see how the seminars' teachings were influencing the participants' lives, as well as their approach to ministry. This survey focused more with insights and observations gained by the participants during spiritual formation seminars. The first reflective personal follow-up survey took place after the first retreat at the end of August 2013, and the second and third took place at the end of September and October, respectively, after the second and third retreats (see Appendix B).

Pre-auto-evaluative questionnaire—posttest. At the end of third spiritual formation seminar and the last accountability meeting, I applied the same survey questionnaire used in the pretest as a posttest.

Expert Review

Two experts in the field of theology, preaching/teaching, and pastoral ministry were consulted to review the instruments: Dr. Randy Jessen, my mentor and professor of

spiritual formation at Asbury Theological Seminary, and Dr. Ajith Fernando, who has been the Director of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka since 1976, is an international preacher and is a well-known writer in the area of spiritual formation. Each expert's packet for review was hand delivered and included the data collection questionnaires.

Variables

The independent variable of this project was the seminar's teachings about practice of rule of life and ministry in union with Christ during the three spiritual formation seminars. The dependent variable was the change in understanding and practice of rule of life and the participants' view of ministry after attending the three spiritual formation seminars. The intervening variables that may have impacted the outcome of this study are the age of each pastor, educational background, marital and family status, and pastoral experience.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are two of the most important factors in assuring that the research study is responsible, sound, and trustworthy. I did the following to maintain the trustworthiness of the research and to make sure that the research instruments were properly made. In addition, I ensured precise handling and collection of data.

I sent the pre- and posttest questionnaires as well as the reflective personal surveys for review to the experts in the field in order to gain their response about the test structure and the content. These experts have much experience in spiritual formation and practice of ministry. The instruments used for the project were explained to all participants in the same way at the same time. Participants also had the chance to comment on and ask explanation of the instrumentation. Regarding the questionnaires,

each pastor answered the same test in the same period of time as test and retest in the same context, using the same types of scales.

Data Collection

The total project covered a three-month period from 1 August through 4 November 2013. I collected data through the preproject survey, pre- and posttest questionnaires, reflective personal surveys, and accountability group meetings.

The intervention timeline for the study proceeded as follows:

- 1 August Preproject survey applied
- 4 August Preproject event (evening)—registration, inauguration, and pretest
- 5-6 August Spiritual formation seminar 1 and posttest 1
- 14-21 August Reflective personal survey 1, sent, applied, and received back
- 1 September Accountability group meeting 1 (evening)
- 2-3 September Spiritual formation seminar 2
- 11-18 September Reflective personal survey 2, sent, applied, and received back
- 6 October Accountability group meeting 2 (evening)
- 7-9 October Spiritual formation seminar 3
- 17-24 October Reflective personal survey 3, sent, applied, and received back
- 4 November Accountability group meeting 3 and posttest 2

The pastors received the preproject survey by e-mail or postal mail just two weeks prior to the first spiritual formation seminar. I asked them to send back the answers at their earliest convenience, at least one week prior to attending the seminar.

From the three auto-evaluative questionnaires (see Appendix C), I collected the participants' views and insights about ministry in union with Christ and how spiritual disciplines they had practiced them in their lives and ministry experience. Participants answered a questionnaire of seventy-six questions that were divided into spiritual disciplines of abiding in Christ (practice of rule of life) and ministry in union with Christ. The topical divisions were not shown on the test paper sheet. The responses had the following Likert-type scale: 1—strongly disagree, 2—disagree, 3—agree, and 4—strongly agree (see Appendix B).

The questionnaire had seventy-six questions and was divided into two components. First component measured the participants' level of spiritual disciplines in view of ministry in union with Christ (thirty-eight questions) and second component measured the participants personal understanding of a rule of life and their level of spiritual formation in terms of practicing a personal rule of life (thirty-eight questions). All of the questions were mixed together. The three auto-evaluative questionnaires (one pretest and two posttests) were conducted with the participants gathered together in the same location. The time allotted for the questionnaires was one hour.

By using the three reflective surveys (see Appendix D), I was able to know how the spiritual formation seminars had been useful for improving knowledge and practice of rule of life in view of ministry in union with Christ. I sent the surveys by e-mail and postal mail, and pastors applied the reflective surveys personally. The survey helped to

understand and measure how the participants' view of ministry and practice of rule of life were improved.

The collected data was organized according to each individual pastor in separate files. Each file had the following order or section: (1) the preproject survey, (2) the pre-auto-evaluative questionnaire, (3) the first reflective survey, (4) the first accountability group meeting notes, (5) the second reflective survey, (6) the notes on the second accountability group meeting, (7) the post-auto-evaluative questionnaire, (8) the third reflective survey, (9) the third accountability group meeting, and (10) the final posttest.

Data Analysis

In order to bring order, structure, clarification, and meaning to the collected data (Sensing 194), the process of analyzing data progressed as follows. I gathered all the questionnaires after each of the pretest and posttest surveys. Data was tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted with a help of a statistician. Researcher documented the pastors' responses from the reflective personal surveys as well as accountability group meetings and recorded their answers in a table format.

I was able to analyze and identify how understanding and practice of rule of life in view of ministry in union with Christ was understood (first questionnaire) and how it shaped their lives and ministry (second questionnaire and third questionnaire). For the three reflective personal surveys, I used seven questions, based on how the spiritual formation seminars helped them, in their understanding and practice of rule of life as tools for their spiritual formation as well their approach to ministry. In addition, I evaluated the problems they were facing when practicing spiritual disciplines in abiding in Christ, how they were handling ministry, and what areas in their lives and ministry were improved by applying the principles taught in the seminars (see Appendix M).

Through the answer for each question, I was able to analyze and identify how their understanding and practice of rule of life in view of ministry in union with Christ had improved subsequent to attending the second and the third seminars.

Ethical Procedures

I included the project explanation and consent letter with the consent forms that the participants returned either in person or by mail (see Appendix A). The participants under senior leadership obtained consent from their respective leaders for their participation in the study.

The statistician and I were the only persons who had access to the data to protect and ensure the privacy of those who participated in the formation seminars. The results from the questionnaires, surveys, and group meetings were copied and given only to the participants. They had a copy of all the contents in their files.

I informed the participants that three auto-evaluative questionnaires and the rest of the instrumentation would examine areas in their spiritual disciplines as well as ministry experiences. The outcomes would be used in the evaluation process to find out how the seminars were beneficial to their spiritual formation and ministry experience (see Appendixes A and F).

Furthermore, in maintaining ethics, the participants were assured of the confidentiality and preservation of the information. The questionnaires were kept confidential, and they had free access at any time to the information in their files with my permission (see Appendix F). Afterwards, all the data collected during the spiritual formation seminars, the reflective personal surveys, and the accountability group meetings were kept and saved in files for further studies. All the pastors' identities were kept confidential; hence, I used a separate code instead of using their names on the

related documents. I would keep the hard-copy files in a double locked cabinet in my local church office and Computer files will be stored on my password-protected hard drive.

I promised the participants that at the completion of the study and dissertation, the raw data would be destroyed to avoid its unauthorized use. Finally, the participants were informed that they would not receive all the information related to the research project. The finalized and approved dissertation could be viewed at a library. I also promised them that they would receive one free copy when the dissertation was published as a book.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

The emphasis on the practice of the works of ministry rather than on the life of ministry downplays the practice of abiding in Christ, which is the very foundation of ministry that requires intentional personal discipline. The reason many pastors do not have this type of intentional personal approach to life and ministry is that they do not have a clear biblical view about ministry and not enough practical exposure towards their own spiritual formation. Subsequently I have observed that misunderstandings exists especially among the pastors of independent churches about pastoral leadership and ministry, the contemporary challenges of today's competitive society, the search for instant satisfaction, the demands of ministry and the increasing pressure put on the pastor, have tempted ministers to "do" ministry for Christ rather than to be intimate with the Lord.

This research was focused on abiding in Christ through gracious loving acts of worship, Bible study, prayer, loving each other, witness and concentrated on developing a rule of life as a spiritual formation tool for practicing intimacy with Christ, resulting in fruitful ministry. The purpose, therefore, of this research was to evaluate the changes in the level of spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and personal understanding of a rule of life among the pastors of the independent churches of the northwestern province of Sri Lanka who participated in three spiritual formation seminars.

Three research questions guided the data collection for this study: (1) What was the participants' level of spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and personal understanding of a rule of life among the pastors of the independent churches of the

northwestern province of Sri Lanka prior to the spiritual formation seminar? (2) What was the participants' level of spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and personal understanding of a rule of life among the pastors of the independent churches of the northwestern province of Sri Lanka after attending the three spiritual formation seminars? (3) What aspects of the three spiritual seminars had the most impact on the pastors in understanding spiritual disciplines and practice of a rule of life in view of union with Christ as a tool for spiritual formation?

Participants

The participants for this study came from the three major cities of the northwestern province: Kurunagala, Chilaw, and Putlam (see Appendix N). Fifteen pastors represented those three major cities with five participants from each. These pastors were selected voluntarily and all were pastoring a church. All the fifteen self-selected pastors participated in the first spiritual formation seminar and fourteen pastors attended the second spiritual formation seminar. Pastor who did not come informed me with valid reasons for the cause of his absence. Out of the fifteen pastors, fourteen attended the third and final seminar.

The demographic profiles of the participants of the seminar were collected in the preproject survey, which was sent two weeks prior to the first spiritual formation seminar (see Appendix C). The preproject survey was comprised of the gender, age range, the status, educational background, spiritual life and ministerial experience of the participants. Following were the findings of the demographic profiles of the participants.

Gender and Ethnicity

Fourteen of the participants were male pastors, but only one was a female. Their native language was Sinhalese.

Age and Marital Status

Participants ranged in age from 25-45 and over. Out of the fifteen participants, five, or 33 percent, were 25-34 years old. Then, nine (60 percent) were of 35-44 years old, and one, (7 percent) was over 45 years old. The age ranges of the participants indicate that all were in their young-adult middle-age years. Even the oldest one was over 45. In terms of the marital status of the fifteen participants, all were married and have children.

Educational Background

Participants had varied education levels, according to the British system of certification. Commonwealth countries such as Sri Lanka follow the United Kingdom's educational qualifications process. The examination boards issue a General Certificate of Education (GCE) to each student, based on one of two levels: ordinary level (O/L) and advanced level (A/L). In terms of theological education, out of the fifteen participants, two of the participants (13 percent) had no formal theological education and while three of the participants (20 percent) had basic training. Eight participants (53 percent) have completed their diploma in theological education and only two (13 percent) were doing their graduate studies after completing their diplomas. This finding means that the majority of the participants have little or no graduate-level education, which I believe should be the minimum requirement for pastoral leaders.

Spiritual Life and Ministry Experience

The ministry experience among the pastors varied from five to twenty-five years. Their life in Christ varied from eleven to thirty years. Most of them were lay leaders in their local churches before they entered the pastoral ministry. Some were appointed as

local church pastors after finishing their studies especially just after their basic and intermediate training.

Denominational Background

Participants came from a variety of independent churches within the Pentecostal charismatic tradition. Fifteen participants represented 13 independent churches situated in the North Western Province.

Table 4.1. Self-Selected Population (n=15)

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Age Range	Marital Status	Education Completed		Christian Life Experience	Ministry Life Experience
					Sec.	Theo.*		
01	F	Sinhalese	25-34	Married	A/L	BTh	11 yrs	10 yrs
02	M	Sinhalese	25-34	Married	O/L	BTh	15 yrs	12 yrs
03	M	Sinhalese	25-34	Married	A/L	Dip.	18 yrs	11 yrs
04	M	Sinhalese	25-34	Married	O/L	Basic	14 yrs	10 yrs
05	M	Sinhalese	25-34	Married	O/L	Basic	15 yrs	12 yrs
06	M	Sinhalese	35-44	Married	O/L	Dip.	30 yrs	16 yrs
07	M	Sinhalese	35-44	Married	O/L	Dip.	16 yrs	10 yrs
08	M	Sinhalese	35-44	Married	O/L	Dip.	17 yrs	11 yrs
09	M	Sinhalese	35-44	Married	A/L	Dip.	13 yrs	9 yrs
10	M	Sinhalese	35-44	Married	A/L	Dip.	16 yrs	10 yrs
11	M	Sinhalese	35-44	Married	O/L	Dip.	20 yrs	14 yrs
12	M	Sinhalese	35-44	Married	O/L	Dip.	19 yrs	12 yrs
13	M	Sinhalese	35-44	Married	O/L	Dip.	15 yrs	9 yrs
14	M	Sinhalese	35-44	Married	O/L	Dip.	18 yrs	12 yrs
15	M	Sinhalese	45 over	Married	O/L	Dip.	30 yrs	20 yrs

*Levels of theological training: Basic, Diploma, and Bachelor of Theology

Research Question #1

Research Question 1 surveyed the level of spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and personal understanding of a rule of life among the pastors of the

independent churches of the northwestern province of Sri Lanka prior to the spiritual formation seminar. The questionnaires were researcher designed and the first set was given out to the pastors as the pretest (see Appendix E). The questionnaires were based on the research questions and the contents of Chapter 2.

The questionnaire had seventy-six questions and was divided into two components. The first component measured the participants' level of spiritual disciplines in view of ministry in union with Christ (thirty-eight questions), and the second component measured the participants' personal understanding of a rule of life and their level of spiritual formation in terms of practicing a personal rule of life (thirty-eight questions). The topical divisions were not shown on the questionnaire sheet and arranged with the hypothesis that spiritual disciplines should be practiced in the perspective of ministry in union with Christ in which Jesus provided his disciples the divine foundation and model for a fruitful life and ministry that glorify God as they remain in him through union, communion, community, and crowd. In addition, spiritual formation is possible only when individuals have a clear biblical view on ministry (ministry in union with Christ) and a proper foundation to be united in the Lord in an intentional and structured way of practicing spiritual disciplines (practice of rule of life).

All of the questions were mixed together. The time allotted for the questionnaires was one hour. The questionnaire followed the arrangement of a Likert-scale format with the survey ranging from 1-4: 1—strongly disagree; 2—disagree; 3—agree; and, 4—strongly agree. The pre-auto-evaluative questionnaire (see Appendix D) was given on the first day of the first spiritual formation seminar during the preproject event (see Appendix E).

The second set of the questions was given out to the pastors as a reflective personal follow-up survey (see Appendix M) and contained seven questions. I applied the survey for the purpose of learning more about what the participants had to say about the spiritual formation seminars and the specific elements of the overall program that were most beneficial in bringing about the changes in the participants' spiritual life and ministry by practicing the rule of life as a tool for their spiritual formation.

Results of the Pretest on the Participants' Level of Spiritual Disciplines in View of Ministry in Union with Christ

In terms of spiritual disciplines, they were divided into five specific areas: spiritual disciplines such as proclaiming the personal knowledge of the Lord, studying the word, praying in the will of God, loving each other, and witnessing the world (twenty-five questions). Thirteen questions inquired as to their spiritual disciplines in the perspective of ministry in union with Christ.

Discipline of proclaiming the personal knowledge of the Lord (questions 1, 10, 45, 46, 72). I surveyed how pastors' personal experiential knowledge of their union with the Lord was developed. Question 1, "I profess my position in the Lord and act from my union with Him," had an average of 2.6. Question 10 had an average of 2.67: "My heart is filled with joy and peace, and I will not get discouraged easily as I go through hardships always praising and worshiping my Lord." On question 45, "My relationship with Christ is motivated more by love than by duty or fear," the average response was 2.67. Question 46, "I believe it's only by the favor of God I could do anything that glorifies the Father," averaged 3.3. Finally, question 72, "My first duty is to love and serve my Lord who is in me and with me," had an average of 3.47. In this group of

questions, the lowest average was on question 1 (2.67) and the highest was on question 72 (3.47; see Table 4.2).

Discipline of studying the word (questions 21, 34, 49, 71, 74). In this set of questions, I found how the pastors had been living and studying the word as a discipline of abiding in Christ for a fruitful life and ministry in the Lord. Questions 21, “I believe the Holy Spirit’s main work is to point me to Christ the word of God,” had an average of 2.93. The average response for question 34, “I study the Bible for the purpose of discovering what Christ is up to and how he wants me to participate in his ministry,” and question 49, “I regularly read and study the word of God according to a plan,” was 2.93. The least knowledge and practice in the area of abiding in the word averaged 1.93 for question 74: “I usually read the Bible only when I need to prepare a Bible study or a sermon.” The participants had the highest average (3.00) on question 71: “When the Scriptures reveal an area of my life needing change, I repent and correct myself in His presence” (see Table 4.2).

Discipline of praying in the will of God (questions 24, 52, 53, 54, 73). In the spiritual discipline of praying in the will of God, the responses averaged 2.6 on question 24: “I have a consistent prayer life no matter what happens.” Question 52, “My prayers focus on expressing God’s will rather than my needs,” had an average of 2.87. On questions 53, “My prayer includes silence, praise, intercession, confession, and request,” and 54, “I pray because I am aware of my total dependence on God for everything,” averaged 2.27 and 3.00, respectively. Finally, question 73, “I have an attitude of praying for the Lost throughout each day,” recorded an average of 3.00.

Discipline of loving each other (questions 22, 26, 55, 59, 60). In this set of questions, I understood how the participants abide in Christ through loving and serving

each other in God's family. Questions 22, "My model in serving the Lord is Christ's greatest commandment to love Him with my whole being and love my neighbor as myself," and 26, "I give next highest priority to my family, wife, and children, after God," averaged 3.13 and 2.73, respectively. Question 59, "I understand my spiritual gifts and use those gifts to serve others," and question 60, "I commit my resources to help others in my church and community," scored the highest average, 4.00. Finally, the lowest average scored was 2.87 on question 55: "I seek to live in harmony with other members in the family of God" (see Table 4.2).

Discipline of witnessing the world (questions 31, 32, 57, 58, 70). I found pastors' level of witnessing as a spiritual discipline. Question 31, "I have a balanced approach to my spiritual life (Not marginalizing the importance of community, as we are a part of the Body of Christ)," had an average of 2.87. Question 32 had an average of 4.00: "I feel an internal desire to minister to and reach others for Christ." On question 57, "I make my Christian life known to my neighbors and beyond, sharing Christ's love by sharing the gospel and meeting their needs as God leads me," the average response was 3.47. Question 58, "I intentionally maintain relationships with those who are not in Christ so that they see Christ through me," averaged 3.60. Finally, question 70, "I share the gospel at least with two people once a week by exemplary life," had an average of 4.00. In this set of questions, the lowest average was on question 31 (2.87) and the highest was on question 70 (4.00; see Table 4.2).

Spiritual disciplines in the perspective of ministry in union with Christ (questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 29, 65). Ministry and call to live in union with Jesus Christ are inseparable for his ministers if they want to be fruitful in his ministry for the glory of the Father because a correlation exists between intimacy with Christ and

practice of spiritual disciplines. The responses averaged as follows. For questions 2, 3, 8, 9, 11, and 12, response averages were below 3.00. In this set of questions, the lowest average was on question 29 (2.87) and the highest was on questions 4, 5, 6, and 29 (4.00; see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Pretest Survey Average Results on the Participants' Level of Spiritual Disciplines in the Perspective of Ministry in Union with Christ (N=15)

#	Questions	Pretest Average
Discipline of proclaiming the personal knowledge of the Lord		
01	I profess my position in the Lord and act from my union with Him.	2.6
10	My heart is filled with joy and peace, and I will not get discouraged easily as I go through hardships always praising and worshiping my Lord.	2.67
45	My relationship with Christ is motivated more by love than by duty or fear	2.67
46	I believe it's only by the favor of God I could do anything that glorifies the Father	3.3
72	My first duty is to love and serve my Lord who is in me and with me.	3.47
Discipline of studying the word		
21	I believe the Holy Spirit's main work is to point me to Christ the word of God	2.93
34	I study the Bible for the purpose of discovering what Christ is up to and how he wants me to participate in his ministry	2.93
49	I regularly read and study the word of God according to a plan.	2.73
71	When the Scriptures reveal an area of my life needing change, I repent and correct myself in His presence.	3.00
74	I usually read the Bible only when I need to prepare a Bible study or a sermon	1.93
Discipline of praying in the will of God		
24	I have a consistent prayer life no matter what happens	2.60
52	My prayers focus on expressing God's will rather than my needs	2.87
53	My prayer includes silence, praise, intercession, confession, and request	2.27
54	I pray because I am aware of my total dependence on God for everything	3.00
73	I have an attitude of praying for the Lost throughout each day.	3.00

Table 4.2. Pretest Survey Average Results on the Participants' Level of Spiritual Disciplines in the Perspective of Ministry in Union with Christ (N=15), cont.

#	Questions	Pretest Avg
Discipline of loving each other		
22	My model in serving the Lord is Christ's greatest commandment to love Him with my whole being and love my neighbor as myself.	3.13
26	I give next highest priority to my family, wife, and children, after God.	2.73
55	I seek to live in harmony with other members in the family of God.	2.87
59	I understand my spiritual gifts and use those gifts to serve others.	4.00
60	I commit my resources to help others in my church and community.	4.00
Discipline of witnessing the world		
31	I have a balanced approach to my spiritual life.(Not marginalizing the importance of community, as we are a part of the Body of Christ).	2.87
32	I feel an internal desire to minister to and reach others for Christ	4.00
57	I make my Christian life known to my neighbors and beyond, sharing Christ's love by sharing the gospel and meeting their needs as God leads me.	3.47
58	I intentionally maintain relationships with those who are not in Christ so that they see Christ through me.	3.60
70	I share the gospel at least with two people once a week.	4.00
Spiritual Disciplines in the perspective of ministry in union with Christ		
02	I understand the necessity for the practice of abiding in Christ as my first ministry.	2.4
03	Foundation For Ministry Is Christ In Me And I In him.	2.8
04	Ministry is hard work if I try to do it by myself.	4.00
05	I am not happy with the results in comparison to how hard I have been ministering.	4.00
06	I spent more time in doing my ministry rather than being in him.	4.00
08	Ministry is not Christ joining my ministry but me joining the ministry for which I have been chosen	2.93
09	I have a clear picture of what really God expects from me as a servant of His Kingdom work.	2.97
11	I have a clear knowledge and understanding of my position in Christ from where I am ministering.	2.93
12	The main goal of my ministry is to be a highly skilled minister.	2.00
13	I am tired of doing the ministry.	4.00
29	My time for praying and development of my spiritual life is adequate for my ministry	1.13
65	As a servant of God, I cannot do anything without Christ.	3.00
76	I understand that a clear biblical view on ministry and a proper foundation to be united in the Lord in an intentional and structured way of practicing spiritual disciplines would have a constructive and life-transformation effect on the spiritual lives of the pastors, as well as on their approach to ministry.	3.00

Scale: 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree as appeared in the pretest.

Observations on the Pretest Survey Results Regarding the Participants' Level of Spiritual Disciplines in the Perspective of Ministry in Union with Christ

I observed the participants' lowest averages on the following responses related to their practice of spiritual disciplines. These issues reveal areas of risk where pastors are living apart from a union with Christ (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Pretest Survey Results That Recorded the Lowest Averages in Each Group of Questions (Disciplines). (N=15)

#	Questions	Pretest Avg
Discipline of proclaiming the personal knowledge of the Lord		
01	I profess my position in the Lord and act from my union with Him.	2.60
10	My heart is filled with joy and peace, and I will not get discouraged easily as I go through hardships always praising and worshiping my Lord.	2.67
45	My relationship with Christ is motivated more by love than by duty or fear	2.67
Discipline of studying the word		
21	I believe the Holy Spirit's main work is to point me to Christ the word of God	2.93
34	I study the Bible for the purpose of discovering what Christ is up to and how he wants me to participate in his ministry	2.93
49	I regularly read and study the word of God according to a plan.	2.73
74	I usually read the Bible only when I need to prepare a Bible study or a sermon	1.93
Discipline of praying in the will of God		
24	I have a consistent prayer life no matter what happens	2.60
52	My prayers focus on expressing God's will rather than my needs	2.87
53	My prayer includes silence, praise, intercession, confession, and request	2.27
Discipline of loving each other		
26	I give next highest priority to my family, wife, and children, after God	2.73
55	I seek to live in harmony with other members in the family of God	2.87
Discipline of witnessing the world		
31	I have a balanced approach to my spiritual life.(Not marginalizing the importance of community, as we are a part of the Body of Christ)	2.87

Scale: 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree as appeared in the pretest.

Pretest Survey Results That Revealed Higher Scores in Each Group of Questions

Pastors recorded higher averages for action in ministry; however, these issues also indicate areas of risk. Pastors are very involved in ministry activities but their failure to abide in Christ means that their ministry practice does not match their rule of life and spiritual disciplines (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Pretest Survey Results That Recorded the Higher Averages in Each Group of Questions (Disciplines). (N=15)

#	Questions	Pretest Avg
Discipline of proclaiming the personal knowledge of the Lord		
46	I believe it's only by the favor of God I could do anything that glorifies the Father	3.30
72	My first duty is to love and serve my Lord who is in me and with me.	3.47
Discipline of studying the word		
71	When the Scriptures reveal an area of my life needing change, I repent and correct myself in His presence.	3.00
Discipline of praying in the will of God		
54	I pray because I am aware of my total dependence on God for everything	3.00
73	I have an attitude of praying for the Lost throughout each day.	3.00
Discipline of loving each other		
22	My model in serving the Lord is Christ's greatest commandment to love Him with my whole being and love my neighbor as myself.	3.13
59	I understand my spiritual gifts and use those gifts to serve others.	4.00
60	I commit my resources to help others in my church and community.	4.00
Discipline of witnessing the world		
32	I feel an internal desire to minister to and reach others for Christ.	4.00
57	I make my Christian life known to my neighbors and beyond, sharing Christ's love by sharing the gospel and meeting their needs as God leads me.	3.47
58	I intentionally maintain relationships with those who are not in Christ so that they see Christ through me	3.60
70	I share the gospel at least with two people once a week	4.00

Scale: 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree as appeared in the pretest.

I found that pastors showed higher averages in their practice of ministry (disciplines of loving each other and witnessing the world) but lower averages in life of ministry (disciplines of worship, prayer and word). Therefore, I deduced that the emphasis on the practice of the works of ministry rather than on the life of ministry has downplayed the practice of abiding in Christ, which is the very basis of ministry that requires personal intentional discipline.

In addition, pastors were not consistent in their practice of spiritual disciplines and not operating from a deeper relationship with Christ. In addition, pastors were not consistent in their practice of spiritual disciplines and not operating from a deeper relationship with Christ.

The following responses to questions 70, 32, 04, 05, 06 and 13, clearly revealed how pastors had developed their practices in a period of time prior to attending the seminar (see Table 4.2, p. 122, 123). Above responses clearly displayed pastors attempt to do ministry apart from their union with Christ. Thus, not being connected with the True Vine, Jesus Christ, and continuing to live a life apart from his union led to contradiction and failure.

Pretest Survey Results on the Participants' Personal Understanding of a Rule of Life as a Tool for Spiritual Formation

I used the participant responses on the pretest questionnaire to discover their level of spiritual formation in terms of knowing and practicing a personal rule of life prior to attending the spiritual formation seminars.

Personal understanding of a rule of life (questions 14, 18, 19, 28, 75). In the field of personal understanding of a rule of life, question 14 had an average of 1.00: "I have a good structured, intentional pattern to remain in the Lord." Question 18 had an

average of 2.33: I have set several specific rules to keep myself growing in the Lord.

(e.g., I will get up at 4:00 in the morning; I will read five chapters of the Bible a day; I will fast one day for a week).” Question 19, “I have kept those rules in a written format as a description and a prescription for my daily growth in the Lord,” averaged 1.47.

Question 28, “Presently I am following a personal rule of life, and it’s in written format,” averaged 1.4. Question 75, “I accept that understanding and practicing a personal rule of life is an essential factor for me and every disciple of Christ to live out a fruitful life and ministry that glorifies the Father,” had an average of 2.53. Finally, in this set of questions, the lowest average was on question 14 (1.00), and the highest was on question 70 (2.53; see Table 4.5).

Participants’ level of spiritual formation (thirty-three questions). I learned the pastors’ level of spiritual growth based on the responses they gave because spiritual formation is possible only in a context where a clear biblical view on ministry and a proper foundation to be united in the Lord in an intentional and structured way of practicing spiritual disciplines. The averaged responses were as follows. Questions 15, 17, 25, 27, 35, 36, 37, 42, 44, 47, and 48 scored the lowest averages below 3.00. The questions with the highest averages, 3.00 and above, were 7, 16, 20, 23, 30, 33, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 50, 51, 56, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 68, and 69. In this set of questions, the lowest average was on questions 14, 27, and 44 (1.00) and the highest was on questions 20, 30, 33, 64, 66, 67, 68, and 69 (4.00; see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Pretest Survey Average Results on the Participants' Personal Understanding of a Rule of Life as a Tool for Spiritual Formation

#	Questions	Pretest
Personal understanding of a rule of life		
14	I have a good structured intentional pattern to remain in the Lord	1.13
18	I have set several specific rules to keep myself growing in the Lord. (e.g., I will get up at 4:00 in the morning; I will read five chapters of the Bible a day; I will fast one day for a week).	2.33
19	I have kept those rules in a written format as a description and a prescription for my daily growth in the Lord.	1.47
28	Presently I am following a personal rule of life, and it's in written format.	1.4
75	I accept that understanding and practicing a personal rule of life is an essential factor for me and every disciple of Christ to live out a fruitful life and ministry that glorifies the Father.	1.20
Participants level of spiritual formation		
7	A strong union with Christ provides me with a long-term pattern of growth, as Christ is in me, to conform to his likeness.	3.00
15	I am disciplined in my spiritual practices.(in making sure not to replace them with other activities that hinder my spiritual growth)	2.13
16	I believe that as we need physical exercise to keep the body fit, for ministry and more we need practice of spiritual exercises in an orderly structured manner to grow in the Lord.	3.00
17	For me spiritual growth is more a process than an event, and it requires personal intentional discipline by the grace of God.	2.53
20	Even though I knew the necessity of intimacy with God, abiding in Christ through spiritual disciplines as a foundation for ministry, the emphasis does not always work out well in practice	4.00
23	Rule of life is one of the best means for abiding in Christ as a tool for my spiritual formation and every disciple of Christ.	0.67
25	The disciples with me are growing in Christlike character.	2.80
27	I keep a journal of my spiritual life and ministry.	2.00
30	Emphasis only on numerical growth has down played the view of ministry as well as the role and importance of my spiritual formation.	4.00
33	I am not consistently practicing the spiritual habits of daily prayer, Bible study, loving and serving others, and witnessing.	4.00
35	I can maturely handle temptation, suffering, and rejection most of the time	2.47
36	I am presently continuing to practice consistently habits of daily devotions, frequent Bible study, and prayer	2.00
37	I am abiding in Christ, and my behavior is actually continuing to be changed like him	2.53
38	I equip others for ministry as I daily grow in the Lord.	2.80
39	Becoming like Christ and serving like Christ is a process and also a lifelong journey	3.00
40	I feel my spiritual life and commitment to Christ is very slowly growing	3.93
41	Spiritual formation is a regenerating activity of the Holy Spirit which produces Christlike character, often engaging with spiritual disciplines	3.00

Table 4.5. Pretest Survey Average Results on the Participants' Personal Understanding of a Rule of Life as a Tool for Spiritual Formation, cont.

#	Questions	Pretest
42	I have a spiritual father to whom I report or are accountable for my spiritual life and ministry	1.80
43	Rule of life is an intention to place Jesus Christ at the center of Christian life and ministry and a tool for bringing Disciples of Christ to a deeper relationship with him and with others	1.53
44	I am satisfied with my present growth rate.	1.00
47	I do not have enough practical exposure towards my own spiritual formation	2.00
48	Peace, contentment, and joy characterize my life rather than worry and anxiety	2.00
50	I am fond of powerful experiences from above, but I show little interest in becoming deeply rooted in Christ..	3.07
51	I trust that I need to have a clear view of the Trinity and their unique roles in my life and community to have a true fruitful ministry.	4.00
56	I also commit my time to grow in my relationship with others close to me and beyond me in possible ways as I grow in my relationship with the Lord	3.00
61	I believe I need more grace, structure and support for my own spiritual formation by the power of the Holy Spirit.	4.00
62	I consciously model my life after Christ not just mentally but behaviorally	2.80
63	The main goal of my ministry is to be a Christlike disciple for the sake of his kingdom.	3.00
64	The emphasis on the practice of the works of ministry rather than on the life of ministry downplays the practice of abiding in Christ.	4.00
66	Intimacy requires intentional personal discipline on a daily basis.	4.00
67	Due to the demands and increasing pressure placed on me, I would neglect my own spiritual formation.	4.00
68	Real evidence of fruitful ministry is growing love towards God, his family, and the world on a daily basis conforming to the image of Christ.	4.00
69	Most often I neglect my own spiritual formation as I don't plan and prioritize my activities on a daily basis .	4.00

Scale: 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree as appeared in the pretest.

Observations on the Pretest Survey Results on the Participants' Understanding of a Personal Rule of Life and Their Level of Spiritual Formation

In the two sets of responses, on understanding a personal rule of life and participants' level of spiritual formation, I observed the following areas with lower averages. Pastors had an irregular custom of getting up early in the morning to seek the Lord and read the Bible, but most of them did not have a good, structured, intentional

pattern to remain in the Lord. Most of them did not have a personal rule as a description and prescription for their daily growth in the Lord. Presently most of them are not following a personal rule of life, in written format, and they did not have a clear understanding of a personal rule of life as a tool for their spiritual formation (see Table 4.6).

Concerning the pastors' level of spiritual formation, the responses displayed that most of the pastors have not experienced a regular spiritual formation process with intention and purpose. They have not had enough practical exposure towards their own spiritual formation. Pastors work hard for Christ but have become tired and discouraged. They neglected their own spiritual formation in being with the Lord (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Pretest Survey Results That Recorded the Lower Averages on the Participants' Personal Understanding of a Rule of Life as a Tool for Spiritual Formation

#	Questions	Pretest
Personal understanding of a rule of life		
14	I have a good structured intentional pattern to remain in the Lord	1.13
18	I have set several specific rules to keep myself growing in the Lord (e.g., I will get up at 4:00 in the morning; I will read five chapters of the Bible a day; I will fast one day for a week).	2.33
19	I have kept those rules in a written format as a description and a prescription for my daily growth in the Lord.	1.47
28	Presently I am following a personal rule of life, and it's in written format.	1.40
75	I accept that understanding and practicing a personal rule of life is an essential factor for me and every disciple of Christ to live out a fruitful life and ministry that glorifies the Father.	1.20
Participants' level of spiritual formation		
15	I am disciplined in my spiritual practices.(in making sure not to replace them with other activities that hinder my spiritual growth)	2.13
17	For me spiritual growth is more a process than an event, and it requires personal intentional discipline by the grace of God.	2.53
23	Rule of life is one of the best means for abiding in Christ as a tool for my spiritual formation and every disciple of Christ.	0.67
25	The disciples with me are growing in Christlike character.	2.80
27	I keep a journal of my spiritual life and ministry.	2.00
35	I can maturely handle temptation, suffering, and rejection most of the time.	2.47
36	I am presently continuing to practice consistently habits of daily devotions, frequent Bible study, and prayer.	2.00
37	I am abiding in Christ, and my behavior is actually continuing to be changed like him.	2.53
38	I equip others for ministry as I daily grow in the Lord.	2.80
<u>Scale: 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree as appeared in the pretest.</u>		

In the two sets of responses, on understanding a personal rule of life and participants' level of spiritual formation, I observed the following areas with higher averages. Responses revealed that even though pastors knew the necessity of intimacy with God as a foundation for ministry, they agree that this emphasis does not always work out well in practice. Their emphasis on ministry activities has downplayed the view of ministry as well as the role and importance of spiritual formation. They also

understand that they are not consistently practicing the spiritual habits in growing in the Lord. They believe their spiritual life and commitment to Christ is very slowly growing, and they displayed a hunger for a strong union with Christ by allowing the Holy Spirit to work in them and by entering a lifelong journey, becoming more like Christ and serving more like him (see Table 4.7). I found that pastors scored very low averages in the areas of knowing aspects of a personal rule of life and of realizing that spiritual formation could not be fully achieved in the absence of a useful tool that provides structure and support for spiritual formation.

Table 4.7. Pretest Survey Results That Recorded the Higher Averages on the Participants' Personal Understanding of a Rule of Life as a Tool for Spiritual Formation

#	Questions	Pretest
Personal understanding of a rule of life		
18	I have set several specific rules to keep myself growing in the Lord. (e.g., I will get up at 4:00 in the morning; I will read five chapters of the Bible a day; I will fast one day for a week).	2.33
Participants level of spiritual formation		
7	A strong union with Christ provides me with a long-term pattern of growth, as Christ is in me, to conform to his likeness.	3.00
16	I believe that as we need physical exercise to keep the body fit, for ministry and more we need practice of spiritual exercises in an orderly structured manner to grow in the Lord.	3.00
20	Even though I knew the necessity of intimacy with God, abiding in Christ through spiritual disciplines as a foundation for ministry, the emphasis does not always work out well in practice	4.00
30	Emphasis only on numerical growth has down played the view of ministry as well as the role and importance of my spiritual formation.	4.00
33	I am not consistently practicing the spiritual habits of daily prayer, Bible study, loving and serving others, and witnessing.	4.00
39	Becoming like Christ and serving like Christ is a process and also a lifelong journey	3.00
40	I feel my spiritual life and commitment to Christ is very slowly growing	3.93
41	Spiritual formation is a regenerating activity of the Holy Spirit which produces Christlike character, often engaging with spiritual disciplines	3.00

Scale: 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree as appeared in the pretest.

Research Question #2

Research Question 2 surveyed the participants' level of spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and personal understanding of a rule of life among the pastors of the independent churches of the northwestern province of Sri Lanka after attending the spiritual formation seminars. At the end of third spiritual formation seminar and the last accountability group meeting, I applied the same survey questionnaire used in the pretest as a posttest. All of the processes used to assess the posttest were the same as those used in the pretest questionnaire. The collected data from the posttest provided information where improvements were made. I was able to analyze the outcomes and see the reasons for achievement or failure in the practice taught in the spiritual formation seminars.

Posttest Survey Results on the Participants' Level of Spiritual Disciplines in View of Ministry in Union with Christ

This procedure helped me reexamine the same areas of discipline observed earlier and to determine changes in the participant's answers after the research intervention. A positive change was shown in all the responses related to participants union with the Lord. Question 1, "I profess my position in the Lord and act from my union with Him," had an average of 2.6 in the pretest, but in the posttests it averaged 3.57 and 3.71, respectively. On questions 10, 45, 46, and 72, the changes were more evident, generally increasing from 2.67 to an average over 3.00 (see Table 4.8). No regressive changes were discovered.

Noticeable changes were shown in responses related to discipline of studying the word ranging from a lowest average of 2.73 in the pretest to an average over 3.00 in the posttests (see Table 4.8). A regressive change discovered in pastors' discipline of searching the Scriptures where the score range reduced in question 74, "I usually read the

Bible only when I need to prepare a Bible study or a sermon,” moving from an average of 1.93 to 1.00.

Prominent changes occurred between the pretest and posttests in all the averaged responses related to the discipline of prayer. The progressive changes on questions 24, “I have a consistent prayer life no matter what happens,” (2.60; 3.43; 3.64), 52, “My prayers focus on expressing God’s will rather than my needs,” (2.87; 3.57; 3.93), and 53, “My prayer includes silence, praise, intercession, confession, and request” (2.27; 3.50; 3.86), were remarkable (see Table 4.8).

In all the results related to the discipline of loving each other, several progressive changes between the pretest and posttest occurred. A slight change was displayed in question 59, “I commit my resources to help others in my church and community,” from 3.60 to 3.64. In addition, questions 22, 26, 55, and 60 indicated noticeable changes from lowest averages of 2.73 in the pretest to 3.71 in the posttests (see Table 4.8).

In the discipline of witnessing to the world, significant changes occurred on questions 31, “I have a balanced approach to my spiritual life. (Not marginalizing the importance of community, as we are a part of the Body of Christ),” averaging 2.87 in the pretest and 3.50 and 3.64 in the posttests. Regressive changes also showed in questions 32, “I feel an internal desire to minister to and reach others for Christ” (4.00; 3.50; 3.00), and 70, “I share the gospel at least with two people once a week” (4.00; 3.71; 3.71). In addition, slight positive changes were shown in questions 57, “I make my Christian life known to my neighbors and beyond, sharing Christ’s love by sharing the gospel and meeting their needs as God leads me” (3.47; 3.64; 3.64), and 58, “I intentionally maintain relationships with those who are not in Christ so that they see Christ through me” (3.60; 3.71; 3.79; see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Pretest and Posttest Survey Average Results on the Participants' Level of Spiritual Disciplines in the Perspective of Ministry in Union with Christ (N=15)

#	Questions	Pretest	Posttest1	Posttest2
01	I profess my position in the Lord and act from my union with Him.	2.60	3.57	3.71
10	My heart is filled with joy and peace, and I will not get discouraged easily as I go through hardships always praising and worshiping my Lord.	2.67	3.36	3.71
45	My relationship with Christ is motivated more by love than by duty or fear.	2.67	3.36	3.64
46	I believe it's only by the favor of God I could do anything that glorifies the Father.	3.30	3.64	3.64
72	My first duty is to love and serve my Lord who is in me and with me.	3.47	3.57	3.79
21	I believe the Holy Spirit's main work is to point me to Christ the word of God.	2.93	3.50	3.71
34	I study the Bible for the purpose of discovering what Christ is up to and how he wants me to participate in his ministry.	2.93	3.64	3.71
49	I regularly read and study the word of God according to a plan.	2.73	3.71	3.57
71	When the Scriptures reveal an area of my life needing change, I repent and correct myself in His presence.	3.00	3.64	3.64
74	I usually read the Bible only when I need to prepare a Bible study or a sermon .	1.93	1.00	1.00
24	I have a consistent prayer life no matter what happens.	2.60	3.43	3.64
52	My prayers focus on expressing God's will rather than my needs.	2.87	3.57	3.93
53	My prayer includes silence, praise, intercession, confession, and request	2.27	3.50	3.86
54	I pray because I am aware of my total dependence on God for everything.	3.00	3.71	3.79
73	I have an attitude of praying for the Lost throughout each day.	3.00	3.64	3.79
22	My model in serving the Lord is Christ's greatest commandment to love Him with my whole being and love my neighbor as myself.	3.13	3.36	3.71
26	I give next highest priority to my family, wife, and children, after God.	2.73	3.64	3.71
55	I seek to live in harmony with other members in the family of God.	2.87	3.04	3.57

Table 4.8. Pretest and Posttest Survey Average Results on the Participants' Level of Spiritual Disciplines in the Perspective of Ministry in Union with Christ (N=15), cont.

#	Questions	Pretest	Posttest1	Posttest2
59	I understand my spiritual gifts and use those gifts to serve others.	3.60	3.64	3.71
60	I commit my resources to help others in my church and community.	3.60	3.64	3.64
31	I have a balanced approach to my spiritual life. (Not marginalizing the importance of community, as we are a part of the Body of Christ).	2.87	3.50	3.64
32	I feel an internal desire to minister to and reach others for Christ.	4.00	3.50	3.00
57	I make my Christian life known to my neighbors and beyond, sharing Christ's love by sharing the gospel and meeting their needs as God leads me.	3.47	3.64	3.64
58	I intentionally maintain relationships with those who are not in Christ so that they see Christ through me.	3.60	3.71	3.79
70	I share the gospel at least with two people once a week.	4.00	3.71	3.71
02	I understand the necessity for the practice of abiding in Christ as my first ministry.	2.40	3.64	3.93
03	Foundation for ministry is Christ in me and I in him.	2.80	3.64	3.71
04	Ministry is hard work if I try to do it by myself.	4.00	3.71	3.71
05	I am not happy with the results in comparison to how hard I have been ministering.	4.00	2.00	2.00
06	I spent more time in doing my ministry rather than being in him.	4.00	1.00	1.00
08	Ministry is not Christ joining my ministry but me joining the ministry for which I have been chosen.	2.93	3.57	3.71
09	I have a clear picture of what really God expects from me as a servant of his kingdom work.	2.97	3.71	3.71
11	I have a clear knowledge and understanding of my position in Christ from where I am ministering.	2.93	3.71	3.71
12	The main goal of my ministry is to be a highly skilled minister.	2.00	1.00	1.00
13	I am tired of doing the ministry.	4.00	1.00	1.00
29	My time for praying and development of my spiritual life is adequate for my ministry.	1.13	3.43	3.50
65	As a servant of God, I cannot do anything without Christ.	3.00	3.57	3.64
76	I understand that a clear biblical view on ministry and a proper foundation to be united in the Lord in an intentional and structured way of practicing spiritual disciplines would have a constructive and life-transformation effect on the spiritual lives of the pastors, as well as on their approach to ministry.	3.00	3.64	3.71

Scale: 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree as in the pre- and posttest.

Posttest Survey Results on the Participants' Personal Understanding of a Rule of Life as a Tool for Spiritual Formation

I used the participant responses on the posttest questionnaire to find out the progressive or regressive changes in their level of spiritual formation in terms of knowing and practicing aspect of a personal rule of life after attending the spiritual formation seminars. In the posttest, I was able to observe how the spiritual formation seminars shaped the pastors understanding of a rule of life and how it provided a structure and support towards their spiritual formation.

In the field of personal understanding of a rule of life, question 14 showed a noticeable change in the posttest average of 3.71: "I have a good structured intentional pattern to remain in the Lord." The other four questions also showed a prominent change, rising from previous averages below 2.00 to an average of almost 4.00 (see Table 4.9). In addition, all the questions related to personal understanding and practice of a rule of life, recorded very healthy averages over the range of 3; question 18, "I have set several specific rules to keep myself growing in the Lord," averaged 2.33 in the pretest and 3.64 and 3.71 in the posttests. Question 19, "I have kept those rules in a written format as a description and a prescription for my daily growth in the Lord," averaged 1.47 in the pretest and 3.71 and 3.71 in the posttests. Most notably, question 28, "Presently I am following a personal rule of life, and it's in written format," raised from 1.4 in the pretest to 3.71 in the posttests. Question 75, "I accept that understanding and practicing a personal rule of life is an essential factor for me and every disciple of Christ to live out a fruitful life and ministry that glorifies the Father," scored a remarkable change from 1.20 in the pretest to 3.71 in the posttests (see Table 4.9).

I was able to measure changes in the spiritual lives of the pastors based on the responses they gave in the posttests, as spiritual formation could be fully achieved only in a context of a clear biblical view on ministry (ministry in union with Christ) and a proper foundation to be united in the Lord in an intentional and structured way of practicing spiritual disciplines (practice of a personal rule of life). I found significant changes on questions 15, 17, 25, 27, 35, 36, 37, 42, 44, 47, and 48, which scored the lowest averages below 3.00 in the pretest (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9. Pretest and Posttest Survey Average Results on the Participants' Personal Understanding of a Rule of Life as a Tool for Spiritual Formation

#	Questions	Pretest	Posttest1	Posttest2
14	I have a good structured intentional pattern to remain in the Lord.	1.13	3.71	3.71
18	I have set several specific rules to keep myself growing in the Lord. (e.g., I will get up at 4:00 in the morning; I will read five chapters of the Bible a day; I will fast one day for a week).	2.33	3.64	3.71
19	I have kept those rules in a written format as a description and a prescription for my daily growth in the Lord.	1.47	3.71	3.71
28	Presently I am following a personal rule of life, and it's in written format.	1.40	3.71	3.71
75	I accept that understanding and practicing a personal rule of life is an essential factor for me and every disciple of Christ to live out a fruitful life and ministry that glorifies the Father.	1.20	3.71	3.71
7	A strong union with Christ provides me with a long-term pattern of growth, as Christ is in me, to conform to his likeness.	3.00	3.71	3.71
15	I am disciplined in my spiritual practices.(in making sure not to replace them with other activities that hinder my spiritual growth).	2.13	3.64	3.64
16	I believe that as we need physical exercise to keep the body fit, for ministry and more we need practice of spiritual exercises in an orderly structured manner to grow in the Lord.	3.00	3.71	3.71
17	For me spiritual growth is more a process than an event, and it requires personal intentional discipline by the grace of God.	2.53	3.71	3.71
20	Even though I knew the necessity of intimacy with God, abiding in Christ through spiritual disciplines as a foundation for ministry, the emphasis does not always work out well in practice.	4.00	3.00	3.00

Table 4.9. Pretest and Posttest survey Average Results on the Participants' Personal Understanding of a Rule of Life as a Tool for Spiritual Formation, cont.

#	Questions	Pretest	Posttest1	Posttest2
23	Rule of life is one of the best means for abiding in Christ as a tool for my spiritual formation and every disciple of Christ.	0.87	3.64	3.71
25	The disciples with me are growing in Christlike character.	2.8	3.50	3.50
27	I keep a journal of my spiritual life and ministry.	2	3.64	3.71
30	Emphasis only on numerical growth has down played the view of ministry as well as the role and importance of my spiritual formation.	4	1.43	1.07
33	I am not consistently practicing the spiritual habits of daily prayer, Bible study, loving and serving others, and witnessing.	4	1	1
35	I can maturely handle temptation, suffering, and rejection most of the time.	2.47	3.64	3.64
36	I am presently continuing to practice consistently habits of daily devotions, frequent Bible study, and prayer.	2	3	4
37	I am abiding in Christ, and my behavior is actually continuing to be changed like him.	2.53	3.79	3.79
38	I equip others for ministry as I daily grow in the Lord.	2.80	3.79	3.79
39	Becoming like Christ and serving like Christ is a process and also a lifelong journey.	3	3.64	3.71
40	I feel my spiritual life and commitment to Christ is very slowly growing.	3.93	2	2
41	Spiritual formation is a regenerating activity of the Holy Spirit which produces Christlike character, often engaging with spiritual disciplines.	3	3.71	3.64
42	I have a spiritual father to whom I report or are accountable for my spiritual life and ministry.	1.8	3.64	3.52
43	Rule of life is an intention to place Jesus Christ at the center of Christian life and ministry and a tool for bringing Disciples of Christ to a deeper relationship with him and with others.	1.53	3.71	3.79
44	I am satisfied with my present growth rate.	1	3	3.71
47	I do not have enough practical exposure towards my own spiritual formation	4	3	2
48	Peace, contentment, and joy characterize my life rather than worry and anxiety.	2	3	3.71
50	I am fond of powerful experiences from above, but I show little interest in becoming deeply rooted in Christ.	3.07	2	2
51	I trust that I need to have a clear view of the Trinity and their unique roles in my life and community to have a true fruitful ministry.	4	3	3
56	I also commit my time to grow in my relationship with others close to me and beyond me in possible ways as I grow in my relationship with the Lor	3	3.64	3.64
61	I believe I need more grace, structure and support for my own spiritual formation by the power of the Holy Spirit.	4	3.64	3.64

Table 4.9. Pretest and Posttest survey Average Results on the Participants' Personal Understanding of a Rule of Life as a Tool for Spiritual Formation, cont.

#	Questions	Pretest	Posttest1	Posttest2
62	I consciously model my life after Christ not just mentally but behaviorally	2.80	3.71	3.64
63	The main goal of my ministry is to be a Christlike disciple for the sake of His Kingdom.	3.00	3.71	3.71
64	The emphasis on the practice of the works of ministry rather than on the life of ministry downplays the practice of abiding in Christ	3.53	3.64	3.93
66	Intimacy requires intentional personal discipline on a daily basis	4.00	3.79	3.44
67	Due to the demands and increasing pressure placed on me, I would neglect my own spiritual formation.	4.00	2.71	2.07
68	Real evidence of fruitful ministry is growing love towards God, his family, and the world on a daily basis conforming to the image of Christ.	4.00	4.00	4.00
69	Most often I neglect my own spiritual formation as I don't plan and prioritize my activities on a daily basis.	4.00	2.00	1.00

Scale: 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree as in the pre- and posttest.

Research Question #3

In order to guide, reflect, inspire, furnish, and empower the participants further, I sent the reflective follow-up survey within one week after each spiritual formation seminar ended. The follow-up survey was sent by e-mail and postal mail due to the difficulty of having face-to-face interviews that would have been expensive and also due to time limitations as the participants were all spread over the northwestern province of Sri Lanka.

This personal reflective survey consisted seven questions and addressed the specific elements of the overall program that were most beneficial in bringing about the changes in the participants' spiritual life and ministry by practicing the rule of life as a tool for their spiritual formation (see Appendix M). I applied the survey so that the participants could evaluate themselves as to how the spiritual formation seminars helped them improve their intimate relationship with the Lord and move and align them with his

mission on earth, not doing their own work, but becoming a part of his work and bringing glory to the Father, being fruitful. The pastors submitted their responses in three stages to update me concerning their state and improvement one week prior to the accountability group meeting.

The three follow-up surveys helped to see how the seminars' teachings were influencing the participants' lives, as well as their approach to ministry. This survey focused more with insights and observations gained by the participants during spiritual formation seminars. The first reflective personal follow-up survey took place after the first seminar at the end of August 2013, and the second and third took place at the end of September and October, respectively, after the second and third seminars (see Appendix B). One pastor did not mail back the reflective survey as he attended only for the first spiritual formation seminar.

Based on the written responses, following are the most significant aspects of the three spiritual formation seminars that had the most impact on pastors' understanding of a personal rule of life as a tool for spiritual formation (see Table 4.10, p. 152).

Teaching about Rule of Life and Construction of a Personal Rule of Life

Question 1 of the reflective personal survey addressed how well the spiritual formation seminars helped the participants in understanding and practice of rule of life as a tool for their spiritual formation and question 6 addressed to highlight the most important aspects of the seminar.

Of the fifteen pastors, fourteen (93.33 percent) reported that they learned the concept of a personal rule of life for the first time. They further reported that even though they may have not known the technical term rule of life, they have had some kind of informal way of practicing spiritual disciplines in maintaining an intimate relationship

with the Lord prior to the seminar. Only one participant mentioned that he had some formal way of practicing a personal rule of life in order to grow spiritually and maintain a healthy relationship with the Lord and to do an effective and efficient ministry. Thirteen pastors reported that seminars were most helpful in understanding a personal rule of life as a tool for their spiritual formation.

The pastor who already had a personal rule of life reported that the first spiritual formation seminar renewed his understanding and commitment towards his own rule to be reviewed and was pleased for this great privilege and opportunity. One pastor did not send his reflective personal survey and left from the whole intervention program as he was so busy with his ministry. I tried to get him into this spiritual formation experience by personally encouraging him several times, but he told me that he was unable because of his ministerial activities.

The responses to question 1 indicated that thirteen of the pastor participants, which is an overwhelming figure, had no clear understanding of a useful tool that facilitates spiritual formation and provides a proper foundation for their lives in the Lord and ministries in which they were involved. They also lacked practical tools and exposure towards their own spiritual growth, even though they had already been involved in some kind of practice for their own spiritual formation. These findings reveal an area that has been largely abandoned especially among the independent churches in Sri Lanka, although they seem to have something of an awakening interest in this process in recent years.

I guided in facilitating the pastors to develop their rule along with the sample goal-setting sheet (see Appendix O). They were asked to use one page in writing their whole rule and to be creative in the framework based on the four areas tied to life and

ministry, namely union, communion, community, and crowd as they learned from Jesus' teaching of vine metaphor.

Once the pastors finished writing their personal rule of life, the accountability groups were formed on the last session of the final day of the first spiritual formation seminar in implementing the practice of rule of life. Fifteen participants were formed into three accountability groups based on age limits so that the purpose of the accountability groups were met with clarity as they continued to function as contemporaries and colleagues. I also understood that age limit was the only indicator to divide the large group because it was the best alternative at that moment. Each group had a leader appointed for one month, and a new leader was appointed monthly as the spiritual formation progressed.

Once the groups were formed and the leaders appointed, each pastor was asked to share a copy of their rule with their respective group, holding each other accountable and reading their group covenant, which explained how the group would work as they proceeded (see Appendix G). I established an accountability group with several purposes in mind. As the group was formed, each and every pastor kept accountable to walk according to an affirmed truth. They clearly learned and understood that meeting God's intended purposes is not optional but essential. Therefore, every member was not only impressed but also became obliged to follow the truth and submit every part of life to God's will to survive and excel in ministry.

Following was an interesting testimony from a pastor that summarizes how well the spiritual formation seminars helped him in understanding and practice of rule of life as a tool for his spiritual formation:

Most of the time when I heard the words rule of life during the first seminar, I imagined a list of rules that I would be obligatory to follow.

This mental picture of a list of rules was not an attractive image for me. I was also an utter failure in trying to practice spiritual exercises by my own strength. However as I learned and understood about a personal rule of life I did not feel like a burden. It set me free to be more with Jesus and focused on a process and a life long journey in becoming like Christ and serving like Christ. I understood that It won't happen quickly and it's not like a quickly spreading fire but it's like a tree planted by the waters deeply roots in setting a foundation for fruitfulness. After all academic engagement with the subject matter in understanding a personal rule of life and more intense practical, contextualized and culturally based training on the same subject matter in constructing my own personal rule of life to live and serve like Christ, and finally with the personal experience of practicing it in an atmosphere of grace, love, trust and accountability, now I strongly agree that a personal rule of life is one of the best means for abiding in Christ as a tool for my spiritual formation and every other minister of Christ.

The pastors who constructed their personal rule agreed and reported that rule of life is a useful tool for their spiritual formation. They were in agreement that rule of life provided a ideal way in living a holistic life with an assurance of a fruitful ministry through an intentional and relational behavior that flows from union to communion and community to crowd as one abides in Christ. They reported that rule of life brought more purpose, persistence, perseverance and order in following the footsteps of Jesus as the rule carried more focus to their spiritual practices.

These assessments suggests that the pastors of the local church, especially in the independent churches, towards a proper understanding and daily practice of set of specific spiritual disciplines, that make them more conscious about their own spiritual formation which is essential if they really want to be fruitful for the Glory of the Father. All the participants reported that the personal rule of life that each pastor constructed was a key aspect of the entire formational process.

Question 7 asked to state any of the least helpful aspects of the seminar.

No participant ever stated that any module was not useful. The absence of any comment concerning least helpful aspects of the seminar is real evidence to the fact that all the parts were necessary for the pastors if they want to live and serve like Christ.

Teaching about Ministry in Union with Christ and Abiding in Christ as a Foundation for Rule of Life

Question 2 addressed how well the spiritual formation seminars helped the participants in their approach to ministry and ministerial activities. For Question 3, participants were asked to explain how do they have understood the correlation exist between intimacy with Christ and practice of spiritual disciplines.

According to the averaged pretest responses, all of the participants were practicing some kind of spiritual disciplines such as worship, studying the bible, praying and fasting as their primary practices. Based on their responses, I found that even though they were good at their level of practicing spiritual disciplines but their level of spiritual formation is very low. This observation suggests that pastors were not consistent in their practice of spiritual disciplines and not operating from a deeper relationship with Christ as an unbreakable union exists between intimacy and practice of spiritual disciplines in leading a fruitful life and ministry.

Union is what Christ did for the disciple in order to be attached to him. Communion is what ministers are commanded to do in union with him in order to maintain a Christlike life and ministry for which they have been ordained and appointed by Christ (John 15:16) The Disciples who are united to Christ are entitled to respond to God's loving embrace. These findings suggest that ministers are destined for spiritual formation and it's not optional.

One of the objectives throughout the intervention program was that life transformation always leads to transformation of the ministry as they are interrelated. Responses to this question revealed that pastor participants recognized important changes in their view of ministry as well as their practice of ministry.

Changes in the view of ministry. A renewed understanding of the ministry was evidenced in the various ways the pastors expressed their current views on ministry:

I thought foundation for ministry is my total commitment to do something for Christ but when I clearly understood that ministry is not to do something for Christ rather than to be in the Lord.

I thought ministry belongs to me but as I learned that conceiving ministry as my ministry was the root problem. I understood ministry is not what I do alone with my might but what Christ does through me.

Realizing it is Christ's ministry caused me the weight to shift. I was totally released from the unnecessary burdens that I was carrying. I remembered the words of Jesus "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

So much of my stress and burnout is the failure to grasp this basic truth of ministry in union with Christ. I was carrying burdens that I was never asked to carry. Instead of following Christ the Lord, I wrongly assumed the burden of ministerial activities on myself and I fall under its weight. Now I am liberated.

I declared Christ as my Lord, but I decided most of the things in ministry apart from him. I understood that I was independent and working for God. I was not accountable to anyone. I confessed to the Lord about my wrong approach to ministry, not being united to him but by being more independent from him.

The greatest problem that I had was temptation to focus on more ministry activities and neglect of my own spiritual formation which was my greatest urgency. Carrying out ministerial activities consequently losing connection with Christ, led me to many unexpected struggles but I understood that my first ministry is to worship and serve my Lord and as a result of that union ministry flows from him through me.

Life transformation always leads to transformation of the ministry because they are interrelated. Union with Christ is the source of the entire transformation process, and

cannot be limited to personal transformation, but also flows through to the transformation of ministry.

Changes in the practice of ministry. Most of the participants reported that their ministerial activities of loving and serving each other in the family of God and witnessing the world was flowing more out of an intimate relationship with Christ and cannot be separated from their own spiritual formation.

All the pastor participants confessed about the temptation of over working and serving Christ from a functional aspect rather than a life transformation perspective in union with him. With the renewed understanding of his true identity in Christ, one pastor said:

After serving God for several years I thought that I was one of the most effective and efficient pastors in the local church and also a well-known preacher, teacher and a miracle worker with the testimonies I heard from the floor but after attending the seminars I confessed before the Lord for my wrong practice of ministry. I seemed to be more successful in ministry at the expense of my own spiritual formation and my family. My wife and children don't accept me as a true servant of God as they have lost their confidence in me for being away from home and neglecting my presence for a long time. In light of this renewed understanding of ministry, I re aligned and reframe my ministry practices as I was constructing my personal rule of life and from now onwards I give next highest priority to my family, wife, and children, after God.

Through my personal observations I saw a real change in his practice of ministry evidenced in growing love towards God, his family, and the world on a daily basis conforming to the image of Christ.

One pastor confessed that being united to Christ and trying to live a life and ministry dominated by his own perceptions, led him to many tragedies:

That's what happened to me and many pastor friends of mine. I confessed that as Independent Charismatic ministers we are tend to powerful signs and experiences from above but not so much trained and used to discipline ourselves to be in the Lord and becoming deeply rooted in Christ.

Another pastor stated that usually the tendency in independent pastoral ministry was to stress mostly practicing the works of ministry rather than life of ministry. A wrong approach to ministry kept him away from the practice of abiding in Christ, which is intentional discipline. After attending the seminars, he was able to awaken the need of spending more time in the Lord through practicing his personal rule of life and enjoy more of God's presence.

Periodic Spiritual Formation Seminars

Out of the fifteen pastors, fourteen of them (93.3 percent) reported that periodic spiritual formation seminars were most beneficial in refreshing and renewing their spiritual disciplines and personal rule of life. The Methodist Diaconal Order writes, "Because of human frailty pastors need continual reminders, they need practical help, and guidance welcoming each new day, week, month or year as a new opportunity to love and serve Our Lord and our fellow men and women" ("Rule of Life"). All the participants reported that they really appreciate if I could continue to have this type of spiritual formation experience at least every other month. Following are some of the requests made by the participants for more periodic opportunities for their formation and reformation as spiritual formation takes time and a gradual process and a life long journey:

Regular spiritual formation program is necessary because spiritual formation is a gradual process and retreats facilitated the pastors to be more aware about their own spiritual growth and practice of ministry.

Regular spiritual formation program is needed especially for the pastors of independent churches as we don't have much practical exposure towards this kind of experience.

We need more seminars like this. Not only for me but there are many who must go through such spiritual formation experiences steadily and repeatedly.

These responses point to the need of the day to launch more spiritual formation programs that will address the lack of trained pastors in formation for the independent churches. Pastoral leaders are repeatedly in need of spiritual formation so that they operate from a deeper relationship with Christ, fostering an unbreakable union between intimacy and practice of spiritual disciplines in leading a fruitful life and ministry.

All the participant pastors indicated that periodic seminars were useful in three main ways. Firstly, the biblical, theological, and historical academic engagement with the subject matter helped them understand a personal rule of life. Secondly, the more intense, practical, contextualized, and culturally based training offered on the same subject matter helped them construct their own personal rule of life to live and serve like Christ, and thirdly, providing an continuous opportunity to go through a personal experience of practicing a personal rule of life helped them remain grounded in Christ and grow into the fullness of Christ in an atmosphere of grace, love, trust, and accountability. Pastors who had a personal rule of life further stated that the overall seminar experience was a continuous reminder to refocus and reframe his commitments towards his own personal formation and transformation.

Focused Life and Intentional Discipline

For Question 4, participants were asked to share some major difficulties that they face as they intentionally commit to practice their personal rule of life. All of the pastors reported their major difficulties that they faced as they intentionally committed to practice their personal rule of life. One of the major difficulties they reported was the struggle to maintain consistent spiritual disciplines because they are not used to doing so. They also confessed to having a tendency to leave the rule and push it back when life got busy or due to various life situations, crises, or family or health issues.

In the midst of all these difficulties, ten pastors reported that practice of their personal rule of life had becoming progressively consistent and more dominant in their life and ministry as they were operating from their union with Christ. I found that those ten pastors were the participants who constructed their personal rule in written format and shared copies with their accountability group. Five pastors did not put their rules in written form, and I observed that they also did not attend the accountability groups regularly. One of the pastors who was intentionally following his personal rule made the following statement:

Most often I threw away my rule of life when life became busy but I believed in Christ who is indwelling in me and my life giver. I understood my priorities and necessity of faithfulness to abide in Christ through his instituted means of grace. No matter what life conditions were. I also shared my difficulties with my accountability partners. They really encouraged me with their intentional prayers and loving service.

Spiritual formation is a simple and also a compound process. The age ranges, past experiences of Christian and ministerial life, marital status, gender, educational background, different kinds of life situations, crises and many other issues could be affected as temptations in deviating from the path of formation.

Accountability group meetings. One of the other major difficulties that pastors reported was attending the accountability group meetings regularly. Some group members had no any experience of an atmosphere of accountability. Attendance of monthly accountability meetings averaged 65 percent. All pastors who faithfully and regularly attended these meetings were in treaty that these gatherings became one of the high marks of the overall project that kept them more focused on spiritual formation.

Understanding value of communal life which is foundational for spiritual growth in a context of accountability, one pastor participant reported that:

As the groups were formed, I was kept accountable to walk according to an essential, intentional affirmed truth. I understood that these meetings were not optional, but essential and obliged to submit every part of life to God's will to survive and excel in ministry. I attended the meetings regularly and shared my strengths and weaknesses. We functioned as a body as anybody cannot grow independently.

Our group acted as a helpful model in encouraging each other in the right direction and learned from each other. We experienced the presence of Christ and opened ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We also grew deeper in our personal relationships. Openness to each also helped the body to enter into the darkened areas of lives where we needed each members intercessory prayers and mutual help to overcome temptations of life and ministry. Even after the monthly accountability group meetings, we communicated with each other and helped in whatever way we could.

Focusing on personal spiritual formation and overcoming the temptation of being away from unnecessary and secondary issues of life and ministry was a continuous challenge, but this emphasis on being in the Lord above everything else was the group dynamic.

I found that those who were intentionally and relationally committed to practice their personal rule of life built strong friendships among them. They also grew in Christ individually as well as a community, loving and serving each other. I also found that those who were trying independently to follow their rule and not attending the accountability groups were struggling with their inconsistencies and stagnated.

To begin training requires enduring significant pain, but after the initial startup pain, training becomes a sort of pleasure. One has to partake in Christ's sufferings as well as his resurrection. The conclusion is that union with Christ requires intentional personal discipline in an atmosphere of grace, love, trust and accountability if pastors want to be really fruitful in life and ministry.

Table 4.10. Results on the Three Personal Reflective Surveys (N=15)

Aspects of the three Spiritual Formation Seminars had the greatest Impact	1st RPS			2nd RPS			3rd RPS		
	Sent	Reported	%	Sent	Reported	%	Sent	Reported	%
Developing a personal rule of life	15	14	93.3	15	12	80.0	15	12	80.0
Teaching about ministry in union with Christ and abiding in Christ as a foundation for rule of life	15	14	93.3	15	11	73.3	15	11	73.3
Periodic Spiritual formation seminars	15	14	93.3	15	12	80.0	15	12	80.0
Focused life and intentional Discipline	15	14	93.3	15	10	66.6	15	8	53.3

Summary of Major Findings

The following are the major findings emerged by the study:

1. A personal rule of life is one of the best tools in the spiritual formation process of pastoral leaders in particular because of their roles and nature of responsibilities in ministry.
2. Christ's loving union with his ministers should be the basis for practicing a personal rule of life.
3. Fellowship and accountability are two most important factors when practicing a personal rule of life to maintain consistency in practice of spiritual disciplines for a abundant life and ministry in the local church and beyond.
4. Pastors need periodic retreats and really appropriate in updating their personal rule of life in order to keep growing and avoid stagnation.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

After serving particularly among the independent church pastors in Sri Lanka for more than twenty-five years, their constant emphasis on practice of ministry rather than life of ministry became so evident. I have also noticed the constant emphasis within the independent churches in search for instant powerful experiences from above rather than becoming deeply rooted in union with Christ. Thus, not being united with the “True Vine,” Jesus Christ, and continuing to live a life dominated by personal perspectives lead to conflict and failure in ministry.

I am affirmed with the truth that ministry can be fruitful only when it grows out of a strong union with Christ. Ministers must regularly and intentionally pattern their lives as a loving response to Christ’s call to abide in him through spiritual disciplines “for being with him, in order to become like Christ, and consequently live for Christ” (Hernandez 35), which is called spiritual formation. Pastors particularly in the independent discipline should know clearly what Christian ministry is and need assistance in engaging proper structures and tools that facilitate their spiritual formation, which is not optional but essential.

Therefore, the purpose of this research project was an attempt to help a group of fifteen independent church pastors in the north western province to ensure a spiritual formation experience in understanding a personal rule of life to abide in Christ through five specific spiritual disciplines and foster a fruitful life and ministry in their localities and beyond.

The major findings mentioned in Chapter 4 revealed that the understanding and practice of personal rule of life of that group of pastors has changed after attending the spiritual formation seminars. As anticipated, the seminars made awareness about the necessity of keeping and practicing a personal rule of life as a means for their spiritual formation.

A Personal Rule of Life as an Excellent Tool for Spiritual Formation

Pastors grew in their understanding of a personal rule of life as a means for their spiritual formation as well as approach to life and ministry in view of union with Christ. They understood that ministry should flow from an intimate union and communion with Christ, which required personal intentional discipline on a regular basis becoming more like him for the work of service.

Of the fifteen pastors, fourteen, or 93.33 percent, displayed a personal and ministerial growth subsequent to the whole spiritual formation process. The personal rule of life that the pastors constructed based on Christ's teaching on vine metaphor, during the first seminar provided the structure and support towards this holistic approach to life and practice of ministry. Approximately all pastors who were asked to specify the most helpful aspect of the spiritual formation project named, understanding a personal rule of life as the most important component.

In comparison to pretest and posttest results, I observed an obvious change in the pastors' level of spiritual formation in view of understanding and practicing a personal rule of life prior, during, and after attending the periodic spiritual formation seminars. In the pretest, I identified the areas of risk in the field of personal understanding of a rule of life (see Table 4.9, p. 138-140). Therefore, I understood that 93.3 percent of the

participants did not have an understanding of a personal rule of life, a proper structure, or a foundation to facilitate their spiritual formation.

In addition, according to the following average responses in their level of spiritual formation, I found three special areas of risk in their behavior. Firstly, the pretest revealed that pastors have carried out their ministerial duties on a daily basis neglecting their own spiritual formation. Secondly, the pretest revealed that the pastors were aware of their wrong approach to life and ministry. Thirdly, the pretest showed that the pastors were willing to admit their urgent need for practical tools and training in order to renew and refresh their lives and ministries in the Lord (see Table 4.5, p. 128, 129). Therefore, I found that this group of fifteen pastors needs more awareness about a practical tool and regular training in the same subject matter that provide structure and support for their spiritual formation.

As I mentioned in the literature review, rule of life and spiritual formation are not new terms for the church and rule of life is a practice that leaders of the church as well as believers have used throughout the centuries to grow in their spiritual lives. Amazingly very few ministers presently practice this powerful tool especially among the independent churches in Sri-Lanka for personal growth and a deeper walk with Jesus. Living by a rule of life has helped many great women and men of God to abide in Christ and experience the success of living out Christ's ongoing ministry on earth.

If ministry is linked to pastors' intimacy with Christ, then all unnecessary problems they face in ministry arise from failing to stay aligned in their position in union with Christ. Misunderstandings of pastoral leadership, nature of pastoral functions, pastoral vulnerabilities, and contemporary challenges might tempt pastors to do for Christ

rather than to be in him, as they involve in the ministry, thus neglecting their own spiritual formation.

Therefore, establishing useful tools for spiritual formation that flow the pastoral functions operating from an intimate union is essential. Johnson clearly posits that if ministers of God are united in Christ, then rule of life helps them to remain grounded in Christ and grow into the fullness of Christ (13). This research was focused on abiding in Christ, the true vine and concentrated on developing a rule of life as a spiritual formation tool for practicing intimacy with Christ resulting in fruitful ministry.

The posttest for the same questions related to pastors' understanding of a personal rule of life displayed clear changes in comparison to the pretest (see Table 4.9, p. 138-140). All the questions related to understanding of a personal rule of life showed a higher average on the posttest. During the time of personal interactions in seminars, majority of the pastors shared with me the areas they desire and commit to change so that they foster a fruitful life and ministry for the glory of God. Following were some phrases quoted from their interactions:

- “Personal rule of life is a simple structure that supports spiritual growth.”
- “I need more understanding and practical exposure on this subject.”
- “I will teach and help all my pastors and believers to develop their personal rule.”
- “Not only for us but all pastors must have a personal rule of life if they want to.”
- “Survive and be really fruitful.”

These expressions revealed that pastors were aware of the importance of abiding in Christ and understood the rule of life as a useful tool to provide structure and support for their own spiritual formation and others as well.

In addition, questions related to the level of spiritual formation, also showed major improvement from an average below 3 on the pretest to an average of over 3 in the posttest (see Table 4.9, p. 138-140). I found three special areas of their behavior that apparently changed. Firstly, the responses to the posttest revealed that pastors were carrying out their ministerial duties on a daily basis from their intimate union with Christ not neglecting their own spiritual formation. Secondly, the average responses in the posttest revealed that the pastors overcame their wrong approach to life and ministry, and thirdly, the responses in the posttest showed that pastors were committed to follow their personal rule of life, a structure that facilitated spiritual formation (see Table 4.9, p. 138-140). Therefore, I found that pastors' level of spiritual formation increased as a result of regularly walk with Christ, abiding in him constantly through practicing their personal rule of life.

The important truth of forming Christ in the disciple and reproducing more Christlike disciples is that the process is not an instant activity but lifelong style. Therefore, every disciple of Christ must understand and have a right perspective on God's process of forming Christ in and through them.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, I concluded that spiritual formation is essential, and ministers are made for it. Ministry is impossible unless disciples follow Christ's commandment and loving invitation to abide in him. Adhering to a rule of life provides Christ's disciples with a tangible means to pursue that intentional relationship with Christ. Christ is the true vine. The vine is the center from which everything grows. The

vine is the source of nourishment and life for every branch. As long as the branches remain connected to the vine, they will receive all the nourishment they need to live. Eventually the branches will blossom and, in essence, bear the fruit of a Christlike life and Christlike ministry, which glorify the Father (John 15:1-17).

Therefore, abiding in Christ and the practice of rule of life are theologically grounded and practically interrelated. Rule of life is a useful tool for spiritual formation to abide in Christ intentionally, to become more and more like Christ, and to serve as Christ served.

Christ's Loving Union as the Basis for Practicing a Personal Rule of Life

As the ministry is inseparable from the call to live in union with Christ, the starting point of the spiritual formation retreat focused on two main divine principles based on Jesus' teaching of the vine metaphor. First was the pastors' union with Christ as God's initiative for life and practice of ministry. Second was God's provision to partake in his divine nature through the practices of personal knowledge of union with him, word, and prayer, loving each other and witnessing the world in response to his abiding love.

Prior to attending the spiritual formation seminars, I saw a disconnection between practice of spiritual disciplines and practice of ministry as I evaluated the average responses of the pastors in the questions related to level of practice of spiritual disciplines. The pastors' responses revealed that they knew that their first duty was to love and serve the Lord who is in them and with them. However, their responses revealed that they were operating not from who they are in Christ but from what they can do for Christ. Pastors fall into the temptation of doing things for God when they forget their true identity in him (see Table 4.3, p. 124). In addition pastors' responses related to discipline of loving each other and witnessing the world also showed a higher average in the pretest.

I found that pastors involved in ministerial activities rather than being in the Lord. Table 4.4 clearly indicated the disconnection exists between life of ministry and practice of ministry (p. 125).

Even though the data indicates that ministerial activities had a higher average displayed than the responses related to the practice of spiritual disciplines in view of ministry in union with Christ, apparently the pastors were motivated more by duty or fear than by love of Christ, which is the basis for practicing spiritual disciplines and practice of ministry. They were not really operating from union with Christ.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the main focus of the vine metaphor is not on disciples abiding in Christ but on disciples bearing fruit from where they are grafted which is their union with Christ. Jesus used the phrase, “in me,” or, “in the vine,” to emphasize the disciples’ attachment to him. Jesus repetitively reminded them that he was the Vine and they were the branches. The whole point of Jesus in this extended metaphor is to help the disciples to understand that their nature and holy privilege is to be vitally attached in him in order to conform to his image and share his sacrificial love. Disciples are grafted into the vine so that they may experience the fullness in him and share his fullness in return with God and others (John 15:12, 16). Jesus emphasized the impossibility of generating this divine life apart from him (John 15:5). Empowering is always essential for disciples if they are to accomplish God’s mission.

Apart from God’s initiative power, mission is impossible because Christ followers are called to carry out a fruitful life and ministry in the same life as Jesus. Ministers could operate and produce much without Christ in them, as Jesus expressed in Matthew 7:22-23, but the “divine life such as we see in Jesus is dependent on God’s own character, power and guidance at work in the life of the disciple. Jesus did not will nor speak nor act

from himself; neither is the branch capable of bearing fruit ‘from itself’” (Whitacre).

Christ’s example paints a real picture of total dependence upon his Father to provide all he needs for life and ministry. Christ’s disciples were to emulate that example.

God expects all his disciples to bear fruit for him by the power of his union: “In Martin Luther’s words, Christ himself is ‘the basis, the cause, the source of all our own actual righteousness’” (Kynes 2). Being united to Christ gives power to love God in believing his words and talking with him and walking with him what is commonly called as Bible study and prayer, also power to love each other and power to witness to the world.

I agree with Purves disciples cannot partake in Christ’s ongoing ministry without careful attention to the disciplines of life and faith that arise from their union with Christ. (125). Table 4.3 and 4.4 apparently displays the real picture of what was going on in the lives of the pastors (p. 124, 125). They have been practicing from their own strength without depending on divine help. The issue is as Paul says, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature” (Rom. 7:18). Operating from self is going back to the old nature: “For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions operated through the law in every part of us and bore fruit for death” (Rom. 7:5). Ultimately, the purpose of the law is also to prove that human beings are unable to meet God’s standards with their own power.

God wants to offer the same fruit of love that Christ offered: “This is my commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you” (John 15:12). God’s standard for ministry is loving God and others as Christ did and now being joined to Christ the true vine, which had been impossible had become possible. Carol Floch captures the idea: “The secret of daily empowerment is to actually give up self-effort the

secret of daily empowerment is the humility of dependence ‘I can’t but He can’” (108). Jesus said, “a[A]part from me you can’t do anything” (John 15:5). The Christian life and the practice of ministry must be in union with Christ.

The exemplary lives of St. Benedict and John Wesley who set their minds on Christ and practiced their lives in union with him revealed that they first emphasize union with Christ and then function from that union. One of the main themes of Wesley is the grace of God that saves and empowers believers to do the work of Christ in the world. Works without the presence of Christ is futile in ministry (Watson 6). As Pink explains, “for our union is the foundation of all communion” (10). Communion with Christ means living in constant, conscious relationship with him as a result of Christ living in them. Christ told his disciples that his word and prayer are the two main actions that will bless them and lead them towards an abiding relationship with him. The whole of disciples’ lives and ministry can be summed up in the central truth of union with Christ.

Union also extends from communion to community and to crowd, as one abides in Christ. Christ’s supreme desire for his disciples to know and experience this essential truth of union is observed as he repetitively prayed for the main focus of his high priestly prayer (John 17:23). Christ lives in his disciples, and they in him, and they partake of all his blessings. Jesus still intercedes for those who have missed this truth of union in him through his high priestly prayer. One of the most important things ministers can do is to embrace their new identities and see themselves through Jesus’ eyes (their identity in Christ). With the vine metaphor, Jesus illustrated the most fundamental and basic secret of the Christian life (John 14:20). Every disciple in Christ has been grafted into an intimate relationship with Christ so that each one conforms to his image and share his sacrificial love in the community of faith as well as in the world.

As mentioned in the literature, Benedict's view is that Christian life is not an individual matter. Jesus established community as a foundation for the growth of his disciples. God in his Tri-unity created man to live a community life. Therefore, God likes his people to grow and live in a community of faith and fellowship as his image bearers. Commenting on this intimate process of individual and communal life, Wooldridge indicates, "Spiritual transformation is the spiritual result, in a disciple, of the communal and personal relationship with God and other disciples transacted in the world. It is a result of the gracious presence of God" (45). Transformation is only possible as one abides in Christ in the community of faith.

Benedict by his example encouraged his students to carry out this model of community life as the body of Christ, starting from their own faith community and to their neighborhood families as well as to their local and global communities. Ford in his research on Benedicts union with Christ and his communal life states that he kept his inner value of stability as he died in the midst of his community. He learned this stability from Christ his Master and loving Lord. His communal life was an expression of Christ's union and communion with him. Benedict's monastic spirituality was a model of a passionate response to living Christ's call to conversion and union (Ford).

In Chapter 2, I mentioned quoting Scharmer, "We know a great deal about what leaders do and how they do it. But we know very little about the inner place, the source from which they operate" (7). He further suggests, "[T]herefore,... mostly important now is 'the essence of leadership ... to shift the inner place from which we operate both individually and collectively'" (11). Union with Christ provides disciples with a long-term pattern of growth to live and serve like him.

Pastors understood that Christ is the sustainer and God has made the initiative to be attached to him. I designed this research project with the conviction that a clear biblical view on ministry (ministry in union with Christ) and a proper foundation to be united in the Lord in an intentional and structured way of practicing spiritual disciplines (practice of rule of life) would have a constructive and life-transformation effect on the spiritual lives of the pastors, as well as on their approach to ministry.

Pastors realized that ministry flows out of their intimacy with Christ and intimacy with Christ is tied to the practice of spiritual disciplines. They also became aware of the correlation exists between intimacy with Christ and practice of spiritual disciplines. As expected Pastors responses in the same fields related to practice of spiritual disciplines showed a noticeable progressive change in the posttest. Following were the response averages found in the posttest (see Table 4.8, p. 135, 136).

I deduced that Christ's loving union should be the base from where pastors operate when practicing spiritual disciplines that extends from union to communion, communion to community and to crowd. Jesus clearly taught the way to his disciples how to stay connected to him on a daily basis by claiming their position in him, keeping his words, praying in his will, and loving and serving each other as well as witnessing to the world in union with him (John 15:1-17).

Then ministry becomes a natural expression of who ministers are in Christ as Willard says, "Jesus called us not to do what he did, but to be as he was, permeated with love. Then the doing of what he did and said becomes the natural expression of who we are in Him" (*Divine Conspiracy* 204). As ministers set their minds on Christ and practiced their life in Christ intentionally and constantly, then loving and serving others will become a natural aspect of that intimate union.

The Importance of Fellowship and Accountability When Practicing a Rule of Life

True spirituality does not relate only to Jesus. The disciples need to abide both in Christ and with one another. Paul gives a good illustration of a body when he explains and advises the Church to function as Christ's body not independently of one another but as interdependent on each other (1 Cor. 12:12-26). Disciples union is God's initiative, but Christ wants his disciples to extend that union from communion to community.

As the body of Christ, disciples need each other for mutual help to grow into the fullness of Christ. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Jesus' use of the words *each other* in the vine metaphor also teaches believers that God's plan for his disciples is to abide in Christ as a community of believers because they need one another. Spiritual formation or growing in Christ and walking with him are not merely a private matter. Disciples are called to live in Christ as well as with the body of Christ.

Jesus formed his spirituality through a small group of disciples. Jesus' teaching on the vine metaphor especially shows that he wanted something more than union and communion. As one observes Jesus' use of the communal language all throughout the vine metaphor, the words *you*, *branch*, and *friend* are in plural form. Jesus' use of these communal words suggests that he has formed disciples to grow and live as a community united in him (Abide 2: 5). Disciples are made to live as a community as God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit lives in Tri-Unity. Growing into fullness of Christ is not a matter of growing alone but also of maturing in the fellowship with other members of the body (Wooldridge 90).

Scriptures encourage Christ's disciples for profound important interaction with one another. Call to live a communal life is not a call for a shallow or unintentional engagement. It describes life of unity, communal love, and accountability (Phil. 2: 3; Col.

3:13; Jas. 5:1-6). These values are personal and require an intimate relationship with people within the community. Abiding in Christ through the community of faith requires more than casual contact with them. It needs meaningful connection of their lives with the whole body of Christ according to the grace given to each other.

In between the seminars, I led the pastors in an accountability group that met every other week for approximately two hours. This group involved sharing of spiritual journeys (recorded in their journals) and accountability for implementation of a personal rule of life developed by each person as taught and guided in the first retreat. Pastors shared their personal experiences in practicing their personal rule of life, their difficulties, their failures, their triumphs, as well as trials and temptations in their journey with the Lord and practice of ministry as recorded in the journals.

I found all the pastors were struggling in keeping consistency due to several issues. Many reported their unfamiliarity towards a regular approach and practice of spiritual disciplines. Some reported their busyness in the ministry. Two pastors commented on their health and family issues. Two pastors reported their failure to plan and prioritize in between the important and most important things. Preventing from the issues of their local church and maintaining the focus on personal spiritual formation was a constant challenge.

They said that there was a tendency to give up the practice of rule of life when discipline became difficult but except two pastors all others admitted that, they were motivated and moved especially by two ways in walking towards the fullness in Christ. Firstly, the majority of the pastors testified that indwelling of the Holy Spirit gave them the wisdom and ability to apply the teachings of the seminar on disciples' responsibility

to remain in Christ. Secondly, the community of faith was formed in an atmosphere of love, trust, and accountability in serving and learning from each other.

Two of the leaders of the accountability groups shared that these accountability groups became a motivation to move forward and conscious of their spiritual formation leaving the secondary behind. They were recovered from the temptation of being independent and they became a community loving and serving each other. Leaders reported that except one group the other groups were eagerly attended each of the meetings.

This group of community displayed a continuous growth in their life and ministry as the three seminars progressed. Majority of the pastors showed a greater improvement and a growing regularity in the practice of spiritual disciplines as they were motivated by communal love. This consistency in pursuing Christ through the spiritual disciplines became evident even after the all three seminars and I observed their fruitfulness in their families, churches and beyond. Those who were really benefited and learned the secret of such a community of faith, proposed me to continue these fellowship groups even after the project was over.

I also observed that few pastors who did not capture the secret of accountability and fellowship thus the indwelling of the Holy Spirit among them and in them because of their independent approach in caring and serving by themselves. I observed all three of them were not consistent in their practice of personal rule of life.

Therefore, I found that practice of rule of life requires continuous loving response on the basis of Christ's union through the power of the Holy Spirit in the community of faith. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, I am affirmed with the truth that apart from Holy

Spirit and community of faith abiding is impossible. The main purpose for walking in fellowship with other believers is for accountability.

Having a connection with other disciples helps Christ's followers to resist temptation and repent of sin. As mentioned in chapter two, I agree that the first role of the Spirit is to help in understanding everyone's true spiritual condition. Second is to lead the disciple in a sanctifying life, and third is to live a life of accountability, knowing that a judgment is there for everyone. Willard's three dimensional framework of spiritual formation paints an amazing picture of an abiding life which is nurtured in a context of relationships, spiritual practices, community and accountability. His observation suggests an abiding life in Jesus, which includes disciples' union communion in Christ and their accountability in lives worth living for God's glory. However, the Holy Spirit's involvement in the life of the disciple and the community validates these means of grace towards the transformation.

According to the reflective personal surveys I found that practice of spiritual disciplines became progressively consistent and more dominant in most of the pastor's lives. They were nurtured individually and corporately through the Holy Spirit and community of faith in harmony with each other, and then an expected growth took place. The second posttest affirmed the regularity and consistency of pastors in practicing their personal rule of life that ensures a strong union with him and long-term pattern growth.

Explaining Christ's model of exemplary behavior, Reginald Johnson mentioned three elements that are foundational to Jesus' spirituality. Firstly, Jesus spirituality was nurtured through a small group of disciples. Then, Jesus used the means of grace which is spiritual practices to be united with his Father and form his spirituality. Jesus also taught the disciples by example. Finally, as a part of His spirituality, Jesus established regularity

of public ministry and private time (151). Jesus life and ministry is marked by these three elements such as union with the Father and the Holy Spirit, constant practice of spiritual disciplines and his communal living.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, I agree with Kevin M. Watson as he clearly points out that one of the main features of Wesleyan spirituality was small group accountability. Wesley's first and foremost instruction for new convertor is to place him in a small group to be held accountable for growing in faith (Watson 12). Wesley believed that accountability to others is essential in the lives of all believers and accountability initially begins as they start to look after each other and encourage each other in faith, as well as helping to shoulder each other's burdens. Therefore, I concluded that fellowship and accountability are the most important factors when practicing a personal rule of life to maintain consistency in practice of spiritual disciplines for a fruitful life and ministry in the local church and beyond.

Periodic Retreats for Pastors to Avoid Stagnation

In the preproject survey, pastors were asked to state their motives for wanting to be part of this spiritual formation process. Several pastors used phrases such as:

- Need time to renew and renovate physically mentally and spiritually,
- Need to recover from my hectic situation,
- Need to relax and restore,
- Reawaken my relationship with God and others,
- Refocus my life and ministry goals.

I observed that they used these phrases to express their general longing for a time away from the demands and pressure of their ministry and re align with the will of God

not being stagnating. All fifteen pastors were in the midst of busy schedule; however, all the pastors revealed the need for restoration and renewal in their lives as well as ministry.

After attending the first seminar one pastor who already had a personal rule of life reported that the first spiritual formation seminar renewed his understanding and commitment towards his own rule to be reviewed and was pleased for this great privilege and opportunity. In addition, when commenting on the impact of the spiritual formation seminars, they also used following phrases such as;

- Spiritual formation seminars helped me in reframing my life and ministry things

- Retreats reminded me the things that I have forgotten,
- Especially the third seminar helped me in revising my personal rule,
- I was totally refreshed and restored back,
- Periodic retreats helped pastors to keep themselves fresh in ministry and, return with power of the Holy Spirit in serving Him.

Periodic seminars started with the accountability group meetings, which were held on the day prior to the second and third spiritual formation seminars as the pastors arrived at the conference center for the regular seminars (see Appendix L). The group meetings continued for 1½ hours each, and the participants were asked to bring their recorded journals and goal sheets along with them as they attended the meetings. Each pastor was provided with a daily, weekly, and monthly goal sheet template (see Appendix O).

Each accountability group meeting had two rounds of discussion. First the group reported their success and failures concerning last four week's goals. The second round is a review of goals set for the next four weeks. Each pastor was given instructions to avoid

the temptation of being task oriented when reaching goals and instead to be purposeful as a disciple must also take the initial step for God to work in his life. In this way periodic seminars provided the way for pastors to update their knowledge and understanding on rule of life that kept their lives and ministry fresh.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Macchia explained the role of a rule of life:

A rule of life allows us to clarify our deepest values, our most important relationships, our most authentic hopes and dreams, our most meaningful work, our highest priorities. It allows us to live with intention and purpose in the present moment. (14)

I found that the periodic seminars were really fitting pastors in renewing, refocusing, reframing and placing their lives in union and communion with Christ as well as the body of Christ loving and serving each other.

In addition, the seminars included times of solitude, personal devotion, times of teaching, workshops, group interaction; fasting and praying, corporate worship, Holy Communion, foot washing, physical rest, team building as well as times for playing (see Appendix F). The pastors really valued the lengthy time to build fellowship and union together. Majority of the pastors commented that the retreats were a great opportunity as an act of changing their decisions, renewing their plans, refreshing their minds and bodies, nourishing their spiritual lives as well as to review and rewrite their personal rule of life in bringing more focus towards life and ministry.

God lives in Tri-Unity and he “made his people for community. Each person has his or her unique life of faith, but it cannot exist separate from the community of faith” (“Lent 2013” 6). As I mentioned in Chapter 1, reputable surveys say that over 70% of ministers live in isolation and do not have a close friend, mentor, neighbor or anyone to guide them or encourage them in their daily lives (Krejcir). Five of the pastors shared that they found their real friends through these seminars and they understood the importance

of having a close friends for the wellbeing of their spiritual lives as well as their ministries. Many pastors were in treaty that they needed a spiritual father and humbly requested me to continue this fellowship and mentoring process even after the project.

Loneliness and isolation are major threats and harmful factors that could be seen especially in independent church discipline. One pastor commented that as we were busy in the church, relationships with other fellow pastors became difficult. Some pastors don't even like to build relationships in favor of ministerial issues. Some ministers do not want to be transparent with their contemporaries due to the risk of being used as a gossip. Many pastor friends of mine are the same. Even I had the same fear.

Another pastor shared that we lived in an environment of doubt where no one trusts anyone prior to attending these seminars but these periodic seminars and accountability groups increased our mutual trust, interdependence and inter accountability. We grew as a community in an atmosphere of recovering relaxing renewing restoring and nourishing. Following posttest displayed a progressive change in terms of their fellowship and accountability (see Table 4.8, p. 135, 136).

One of the other major threats for pastors is that they overwork and as I mentioned in chapter 01 reputable sources say that the 90% of ministers still abide in their ministerial activities more than 50 to 75 hours per week (Krejcir). The nature of pastoral functions requires hard labor, constant care and continual commitment. Pastors need periodic rest to renew and refresh their lives. One pastor commented that the periodic seminars for him made a Sabbath rest.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Benedict in his rule encourages the Christ followers particularly for practices of prayer, work in the neighborhood, spiritual reading, welcoming strangers and renewal. As Ford points out renewal included the discipline of

practicing Sabbath and cultivating an interest that reminds Christ's disciples of the importance of practicing the presence of God and spending time in contemplation to "enjoy beauty, love, and renewal in their daily lives" (Ford 3). Renewal fills the disciple with complete joy, strength as well as restoration (Neh. 8:10). Renewal is the time to remember that everything and all people, especially the whole universe, "is still centered on the Divine, and that God is the ultimate center of everything and all their rule of life" (Ford 3). Trying to do ministry apart from God's empowerment is fruitless. Disciples are unable to perform any good work that is pleasing to God unless he first empowers to do so. Practicing Sabbath put the disciple in a place where he could experience God's grace more readily.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, I am affirmed with the truth that no one can serve Christ in permanent isolation. In the life of faith, a dynamic motion from isolation to community must be sought. Solitude with Christ through Sabbath rest empowers the disciple for community. Gospel writers clearly reveal that Christ regularly kept Sabbath rest for his time alone with the Father, even though he had many work to do.

The Gospel of Mark records nearly nine times, Jesus going on spiritual retreats either alone with his Father or with his beloved apostles. Those spiritual retreats offer the way for Jesus to abide with the Father and able to bear remarkable fruit for the kingdom. Mathew records that "when Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place" (Matt. 14:13). The immediate context is that John the Baptist his forerunner had been imprisoned and was beheaded. Might be Jesus was mourning as he being the Son of man losing his ministry partner who prepared his way.

While Scripture provides no evidence of what he did during the retreat, he returned again in strength to carry out his Father's work. If Jesus needed periodic retreats,

how much more do the “vine branches” need to seek divine moments for their renewal and restoration. Jesus emphasized the importance of having regular Sabbath rest for his disciples to renew and refresh their lives so that they continue to bear remarkable fruit for the kingdom in the context of tests and trials of day today ministries. Pastors should not depend on others to take them for retreats but taking Sabbath rest must be a regular discipline if they really want to bear remarkable fruit for the kingdom.

Implications of the Findings

All the pastors who attended the seminars and went through this process have proven that understanding and practicing a personal rule of life is a useful tool for their spiritual formation. These findings have two major implications.

Through this spiritual formation process, a real need for pastors became evident, not only in the independent churches but also in other denominations, to establish useful tools for their spiritual formation that flow the pastoral functions operating from an intimate union with Christ. All the pastors were in treaty that the personal rule of life that they constructed was the most helpful component of the entire formational process.

Pastors who lived by a personal rule of life as a loving response to Christ’s charge to abide in him, have proven even today that understanding and practicing a personal rule of life is a useful tool for their spiritual formation. This finding gives voice to pastors in any denominational setting to recapture this truth of living by a personal rule of life that provides structures, and supports their spiritual formation, which is their greatest priority in ministry to live and serve like Christ.

This finding also has a second application. Great scholars have compared this process of spiritual transformation and practice of spiritual disciplines to a curriculum in Christlikeness. I agree that calling the practice of rule of life a curriculum is an accurate

description of the process. Unfortunately spiritual formation and practice of spiritual disciplines have become hidden curriculums and has been largely abandoned especially among the seminaries and bible colleges involved in making leaders for the kingdom. I thank God one of the largest interdenominational seminary in Sri Lanka has already included a training module on spiritual formation after talking with me about this intensive formational experience.

All academic institutions who involve in the process of shaping and molding pastoral leaders for the local church and beyond will really benefit as they pay much attention on this area of spiritual formation and offer right motivation and opportunities formally and informally to go through such experiences as a significant part of their lives and ministries.

Limitations of the Study

Majority of the pastors commented that this research project could have been more effective and efficient if they had enough time between the three spiritual formation seminars. This project involved a commitment of three months. Some of the instruments were preproject survey, three auto-evaluative questionnaires, three spiritual formation retreats, three reflective personal surveys, and three accountability group meetings with the purpose of implementation of a rule of life to aid in intimacy with Christ and foster a fruitful ministry. The time we had was not enough to observe the real changes in between the pretest and posttest because growth always takes time. I think that the pastors would have given more time in between the retreats and reflective personal surveys and to reflect on the concepts taught in the seminar. As a result I would have received more effective answers in the posttest. The overall impact of this formation process would have been better if the pastors could have gone through this experience for a year.

This research project was also limited to fifteen pastors came from the independent church in the north western province of Sri Lanka. Other pastors who were serving in all the other provinces didn't have the opportunity to participate due to the economical and logistical conditions of traveling and the high cost of receiving a large number of participants in the formation seminars. As every pastor has his, own contextual setting based on his locality, I think I would have found some changes in responses and result with a larger number of participants. The study was also focused and restricted mainly to pastoral leaders in a particular denomination in mind limited me having pastors from many other denominations who had a greater impact on the Sri Lankan church.

Spiritual formation, practice of spiritual disciplines and rule of life are vast subjects, and I admit that not all areas and issues have been taken into explanation in this project. The study was primarily focused and limited to personal understanding of rule of life as a tool for spiritual formation. Due to the focus of this study, other dynamics of spiritual formation, such as formation of family, cultural and social aspects of formation and historical spiritual disciplines were not discussed in detail.

Unexpected Observations

Pastors are in spiritual warfare in ministry and If allowed, then the enemy would like to keep pastors busy tempting them to focus more on practice of ministry or some other issue at the expense of their own spiritual formation. Having understood this situation, I had a special time reserved for intercessory prayers with my prayer team at the church and depended on God to work on the lives of the pastors. Thank God we had 100 percent attendance for the first seminar on the first day and evening. All had a wonderful time together with the Lord and left home on the last day.

The most significant surprise during the project was the struggle that pastors had when attending the second seminar. Just one week before the seminar I gave each of them a phone call with a prayer as my second reminder and everyone confirmed their coming. I was surprised when eight pastors had come in the evening for the second seminar. I found that one pastor's fellow worker was severely persecuted and he had to go to hospital to be with him. One pastor's mother-in-law died. Two of the pastors were severely sick. The female pastor of the group experienced, her son was also having fever. Two pastors were still in their ministries until late night. One pastor could not be reached at all.

I prayed all through the night so that God would bring them in the morning, and except for two pastors all others came in the morning. One pastor totally resigned from the project and told me that he was unable to manage his workload, and the other pastor told me that he would continue from the third seminar. I conducted a separate seminar for him with his permission to cover the second seminar experience. On the final day of the third seminar, some pastors testified about the enemy's attack because of their weaknesses, and some really understood the warfare during the process.

Another unexpected surprise that I observed in this spiritual formation process was fellowship with each other even after the seminar was finished. Usually in independent churches the pastors minister most often only with their own fellow workers due to various issues. All these pastors came from twelve different independent churches, and they met for the first time on preproject interview. I saw their struggle in coming together as several pastors had trust issues in accountability groups.

I thought I would have a difficult time in bringing them together because of their individual differences and unique nature of independence from each other. Some participants were senior pastors of large churches. Some of them represented small local

Assemblies. One participant was a female pastor. Two pastors came from a recently planted church (left from a one participant's church due to some conflict). Participant's age ranged from twenty five to fifty. They also had different views on Christian doctrines and other issues such as water baptism, speaking in tongues, and miracles.

However their fellowship was really outstanding as I observed their mutual trust, love, accountability, and growth as the body of Christ. They took responsibility to do their part for their own spiritual formation and also offer high concern for the spiritual lives of others in the group. They committed themselves to listen intensely to each other and provide each member and kept the confidentiality of other group members, not disclosing confidential things shared by them. They talked of weaknesses, strengths, and even brokenness. They were open to each other and respected each other. They committed to pray regularly for all their pastor friends in the group. Pastors need fellow pastors to share their depths openly, something that would be difficult to do with their own church.

Recommendations

Finally, I recommend several suggestions to those who wish to implement or redo a spiritual formation process in developing a personal rule of life that provides structure and support for a fruitful life as well as ministry.

The first recommendation is that this spiritual formation process was applied in the Sri Lankan context particularly for independent churches; however, this practical training on developing a rule of life can be adjusted for other denominations, institutions, those who wish to replicate the event and the process. The second recommendation is to extend the time in engaging the academic knowledge and practical training as well as personal experience on the subject matter to at least six to nine months in an atmosphere

of accountability and fellowship. The third recommendation is that each and every denominational leaders and heads of all training institutions should consider this practice not as an option but as mandatory and encourage all disciples of Christ to live by a personal rule of life assuring a succession of leadership. The fourth recommendation is that this type of spiritual formation process is ideal for people those who understand a personal rule of life for the first time and otherwise the contents of the seminars must be adjusted based on the participants context. The fifth recommendation is that after the formation experience, a proper follow up should be done by the church leadership to help their fellow leaders regularly to grow into the fullness of Christ and to experience a fruitful life as well as ministry in their locality and beyond.

Postscript

For me the result of attempting ministry apart from a union with Christ is disaster. Pastors as well as the local church go through its consequences and have suffered over the years in the history of the Sri Lankan church. Hence, establishing useful tools for spiritual formation that flow the pastoral functions operating from an intimate union with Christ is essential. Throughout the whole spiritual formation process, I realized that adhering to a personal rule of life provides Christ's disciples with a tangible means to pursue that intentional relationship with Christ to walk and work with him. I know that the blessings of being a pastor are many. However, it is also a vocation of exciting experiences and pressure-filled ministry. These pressures sometimes go beyond human capabilities. For this reason I need to remain in Christ consistently because effective service and fruitful ministry is linked with disciple's intimacy with him. The disciples need to abide both in Christ and with one another. Paul gives a good illustration of a body when he explains and advises the Church to function as Christ's body not independently

of one another but as interdependent on each other (1 Cor. 12:12-26). Disciples' union is God's initiative, but Christ wants his disciples to extend that union from communion to community.

I have a great concern for my loving pastor friends who attended the seminars. They need more academic engagement, more intense, conceptual training, and personal experience in the area of spiritual formation. I have observed their constant temptation to focus on ministerial activities rather than on life of ministry. Most often it is also true of me. Therefore, I learned that we need each other to grow as the body of Christ being interdependent and interaccountable. I thank God that even after the seminar our fellowship endures. I will continue with it and make it one of my priorities because accountability to others is essential, and accountability initially begins as we start to look after each other and encourage each other in faith, as well as help bear each other's burden which is God's framework for the New Testament church. I have learned that rule of life is an intention to place Jesus Christ at the center of Christian life and ministry and as a tool for bringing disciples of Christ to a deeper relationship with him and with others. As time goes, taking regular Sabbath rest is essential for me to renew and refresh my life and ministry so that I may continue my walk with Christ more aligned with his mind and heart. I trust that periodic retreat would help me in this process to reframe my life and ministry through updating my rule of life.

Finally, as a pastor and leader, I must spend more time with my own family and church family who are the body of Christ, creating for them the same atmosphere. I have already shared my personal rule of life with them, and they are also in the process of a developing and practicing a personal rule of life based on their capacity.

Jesus taught the metaphor of the vine and the branches (John 15:5). Today, some two thousand years away from that last night of Jesus' discourse, this lesson is still Jesus' implication for the life and the work of the pastor. Therefore, abiding in Christ and the practice of rule of life are theologically grounded and practically interrelated.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT

Date:

Dear Pastor,

I am currently finishing a doctoral program at Asbury Theological Seminary with a concentration on the spirituality of leaders. I am putting together a dissertation project and wanted to invite you to become part of this project.

I've been privileged to serve as a pastor of several congregations over the course of many years, and I know that the blessings of being a pastor are many. However, it is also a vocation of exciting experiences and pressure-filled ministry. These pressures sometimes go beyond our human capabilities. For this reason we are continually in need of remaining in Christ as our ministries flow out of our union with Christ who is the true vine and source of all ministries.

Therefore we must respond in faithful obedience to His call, abiding in Him through the spiritual disciplines as effective service and fruitful ministry is linked with our intimacy with Him. However the greatest problem in ministry is pastors' temptation to focus on more ministry activities and neglect of their own spiritual formation, which is their greatest priority. Carrying out ministry duties subsequently losing connection with Christ will necessarily lead to many unexpected struggles. As a result unfortunately pastors as well as the local church go through its consequences and have suffered over the years in the history of the Pentecostal charismatic church of Sri Lanka and all around the world.

I would like to address this issue in my doctoral research. I trust that ministry can be fruitful only when it cultivates out of a direct and intimate relationship with our Lord. The ministers who have lost sight of the biblical doctrine of union with Christ, doing their own thing and striving for perfection in their own terms, will always result in failure. Our mission is inseparable from our call to live in union with Him. "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4). Therefore, I believe that each and every disciple of Christ must take the responsibility to do his or her own part to follow the footsteps of Jesus and examples of the great heroes of faith. They proved the truth that foundation for fruitful life and ministry is nothing except disciplined life aligned with God to work in them and also to transform the world. Even though this is an academic requirement, I have two main objectives in conducting this spiritual formation seminar: (1) to assist those who really see their need for intimacy with Christ engage in spiritual practices and participate in His ongoing ministry for the initial group of pastors, and (2) out of this outcome, to develop a model that could be used across denominations to bring real understanding and practice of ministry.

Hence, I am interested in finding fifteen to twenty pastors whose deep desire is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ intimately, being connected to Him and fruitful for the glory of the Father. These participants must be willing to be in a spiritual formation seminar designed to help them understand and practice the spiritual disciplines that Christ taught in such a pattern is called a rule of life. This project involves a commitment of three months. Some of the instruments are a preproject survey, three auto-evaluative questionnaires, three spiritual formation retreats, three reflective personal surveys, and

three accountability group meetings with the purpose of implementation of a rule of life to aid in intimacy with Christ and foster a fruitful ministry. I have attached a schedule of the whole spiritual formation process, so if you are interested you can make early reservations.

Since the answers are related to your personal practices on spiritual life, I want to assure you that your responses will be kept confidential. Your name will be coded in such a way that I will be the only person to know it. The data collected in personal surveys and meetings will not be disclosed. It will be used entirely for the purposes of this study.

I believe the findings of this research will assist me in providing better approaches for training and sustaining effective pastors. My hope is that your view of ministry as well as your practice of ministry will have a great impact on the independent churches in northwestern province will be helped because you have taken the time to participate in these spiritual formation seminars. Once the seminars are completed in approximately three months, I personally will archive the individual surveys and keep them confidential according to the codes given to each participant for an indefinite period, at least until my dissertation is written and approved. I may return to these surveys just in case when developing any program about practice of rule of life but without mentioning your name.

I realize that your participation is entirely voluntary, and I appreciate your willingness to consider participating in the spiritual formation seminars and to respond to several instruments as explained. Please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience and any other time if you need any more information. I also kindly urge you to pray for this event.

Thank you so much for being patient in reading my letter. May God Bless you!

In Christ,

Rev. Upul Nishantha Silva
Senior Pastor and General Secretary for the North Western Province,
Assembly of God
Kulipitiya.

* Pls reply on or before 24 June 2013

* Pls cut here along the dotted line

I volunteer to participate in the Spiritual Formation process explained above.

I allow the use of the instruments in collecting information but without mentioning my name Yes, ☐ No

Your Name with initials: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

SCHEDULED TIMELINE

OF THE WHOLE SPIRITUAL FORMATION PROCESS—2013

Scheduled Time Line and Events	
10 June	Invitation letters sent by e-mail and postal mail
24 June	Responses received
1 August	Preproject survey applied
4 August	Preproject event (evening)—registration, inauguration, and pretest
5-6 August	Spiritual formation seminar 1 and posttest 1
14-21 August	Reflective personal survey 1, sent, applied, and received back
1 September	Accountability group meeting 1 (evening)
2-3 September	Spiritual formation seminar 2
11-18 September	Reflective personal survey 2, sent, applied, and received back
6 October	Accountability group meeting 2 (evening)
7-9 October	Spiritual formation seminar 3
17-24 October	Reflective personal survey 3, sent, applied, and received back
4 November	Accountability group meeting 3 and posttest 2

APPENDIX C**PREPROJECT SURVEY**

Dear Pastor,

I received your response form and thank God for your great concern and interest in participating in this spiritual formation process. As you know, there are only two weeks before our first spiritual formation seminar's preproject event, I am very much excited to meet you and pray that you will have a great encounter with Jesus as you begin to walk through this experience.

The enclosed preproject is one of our starting points, and right now you can begin your journey by answering the questions related to yourself and your being and doing with the Lord Jesus Christ. Firstly, your answers will help me have some contextual knowledge about you. Second, I would be able to have some understanding about your being with the Lord and the various ways and specific patterns that you have followed to be with him. Third, I will know how far such approaches really worked in your life and ministry in fulfilling his intended purposes over the time. Finally, I will learn from each other, understand, evaluate, and determine our ways to operate from a deeper relationship with Christ as there is an unbreakable union between intimacy and practice of spiritual disciplines in leading a fruitful life and ministry.

As I have already promised you, all data that you offer through your participation in this research would be kept confidential and you would not be identified personally in any part of this project. It would be really appreciated if you would send back the answers in the self-addressed, stamped envelope or by e-mail one week prior to attending the spiritual formation seminar. Please feel free to contact me if you need any clarification regarding the questionnaire or any other matter. Thank you very much in advance for your kind contribution towards this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Rev. Upul Nishantha Silva
Senior Pastor and General Secretary for the North Western Province,
Assembly of God
Kulipitiya.

Part 1: Demographics

1. Name in full: Surname: _____
 First name: _____
 Middle Name: _____

Please answer this section marking an X to the right of the item that describes you

2. Gender: male _____ female _____
3. Age range: 25-34 _____ 35-44 _____ 45 and over _____
4. Marital status: single _____ married _____
5. Educational background:
- Secondary school (grade 1-9) _____ Gce O/L _____ Gce A/L _____
- Some college or technical school _____ Bth _____
- MA or equivalent _____
6. Theological education
- Basic training (from 1-2 yrs.) _____ Diploma _____ BTh _____ MDiv _____

Part 2: Spiritual life and Ministry

Please limit your words to 100 as you answer this section and use a separate sheet

7. Approximate years of active faith in the Lord: _____
8. Please explain how you entered full-time ministry: _____
9. How many years have you been in full-time ministry: _____
10. Are you the senior pastor of the church or under a senior pastor? _____
11. Do you have any one to whom you report or are accountable for your spiritual life and ministry? _____
12. Could you please list the ministerial activities in which you have been involved during the last two years? _____
13. Could you please state how you spend a 24-hour day generally in your lifestyle?
 Please state the time you allocate for each activity.
14. How would you describe the present state of your spiritual life?

15. How would you describe your understanding of ministry?
16. What type of spiritual disciplines and pattern do you engage in?
17. Do you have a structured intentional way of practicing some specific spiritual disciplines in your daily life?
18. Do you have them written clearly so that it will help you as a tool to spiritual growth?
19. What are the specific needs in your spiritual life and ministry at this time?
20. How would you describe the present state of your ministry?
21. Have you attended a spiritual formation seminar or any kind of program that related to spiritual formation in the last twelve months?
22. Do you regularly meet with one or more other pastors or with a group of friends for the purpose of deepening your relationship with Christ?
23. Do you set daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly goals for your spiritual life and ministry and a way to achieve these goals?
24. What is your vision and mission?
25. What are your motives for wanting to be part of this spiritual formation process?

This is the end of the preproject questionnaire. Thank you so much for your cooperation. May god bless you as you journeying with Christ through the next exciting steps of this spiritual formation process!

If you have any further comments, please write them in the space below.

APPENDIX D

AUTO-EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

I appreciate your coming to these spiritual formation seminars. Thank you for your willingness to answer this questionnaire and please do not hesitate to ask me for any clarification if needed. All of your answers will be strictly confidential. I will code your questionnaire so that I can be the only person to know your answers. Your answers will help me know the current status of your practice and the pattern of your spiritual disciplines and view of ministry.

Sincerely,

Pastor Upul Nishantha

Directions for completing the questionnaire:

- Please be kind enough to make sure you answer the entire questionnaire.
- Please read the following and write the number that best represents your view according to the following scale:

4—Strongly Agree; 3—Agree; 2—Disagree; 1—Strongly Disagree

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. I profess my position in the Lord and act from my union with Him. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 2. I understand the necessity for the practice of abiding in Christ as my first ministry. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 3. Foundation for ministry is Christ in me and I in Him. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 4. Ministry is hard work if I try to do it by myself. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 5. I am not happy with the results in comparison to how hard I have been ministering. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 6. I spent more time in doing my ministry rather than being in Him. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 7. A strong union with Christ provides me with a long-term pattern of growth, as Christ is in me, to conform to his likeness. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 8. Ministry is not Christ joining my ministry but me joining the ministry for which I have been chosen. | 1 2 3 4 |

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. I have a clear picture of what really God expects from me as a servant of His Kingdom work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. My heart is filled with joy and peace, and I will not get discouraged easily as I go through hardships always praising and worshipping Jesus. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. I have a clear knowledge and understanding of my position in Christ from where I am ministering. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. The main goal of my ministry is to be a highly skilled minister. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. I am tired of doing the ministry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. I have a good structured intentional pattern to remain in the Lord. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. I am disciplined in my spiritual practices.(in making sure not to replace them with other activities that hinder my spiritual growth) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. I believe that as we need physical exercise to keep the body fit, for ministry and more we need practice of spiritual exercises in an orderly structured manner to grow well in the Lord. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. For me spiritual growth is more a process than an event, and it requires a price. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. I have set several specific rules to keep myself growing in the Lord. (e.g., I will get up at 4:00 in the morning; I will read five chapters of the Bible a day; I will fast one day for a week). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. I have kept those rules in a written format as a description and a prescription for my daily growth in the Lord. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. Even though I knew the necessity of intimacy with God, abiding in Christ through spiritual disciplines as a foundation for ministry, the emphasis does not always work out well in practice. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 21. I believe the Holy Spirit's main work is to point me to Christ the word of God. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22. My model in serving the Lord is Christ's greatest commandment to love Him with my whole being and love my neighbor as myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 23. I agree that a rule of life is one of the best means for abiding in Christ as a tool for my spiritual formation and every other disciple of Christ. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24. I have a consistent prayer life no matter what happens. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 25. The disciples with me are growing in Christ like character. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 26. I give next highest priority to my family, wife, and children, after God. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 27. I keep a journal of my spiritual life and ministry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 28. Presently I am following a personal rule of life, and it's
in written format. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 29. My time for praying and development of my spiritual life is adequate
for my ministry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 30. Emphasis only on numerical growth has down played the view
of ministry as well as the role and importance of my spiritual formation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 31. I have a balanced approach to my spiritual life.(Not marginalizing
the importance of community, as we are a part of the Body of Christ) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 32. I feel an internal desire to minister to and reach others for Christ. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 33. I am not consistently practicing the spiritual habits of daily prayer,
Bible study, loving and serving others, and witnessing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 34. I study the Bible for the purpose of discovering what Christ is up to
and how he wants me to participate in his ministry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 35. I can maturely handle temptation, suffering, and rejection most
of the time. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 36. I am presently continuing to practice consistently habits
of daily devotions, frequent Bible study, and prayer. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 37. I am abiding in Christ, and my behavior is actually
continuing to be changed like him. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 38. I equip others for ministry as I daily grow in the Lord. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 39. Becoming like Christ and serving like Christ is a process and also a
Lifelong journey . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 40. I feel my spiritual life and commitment to Christ is very
slowly growing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 41. Spiritual formation is a regenerating activity of the Holy Spirit
that produces Christlike character, often engaging
with spiritual disciplines. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 42. I have a spiritual father to whom I report or are accountable
for my spiritual life and ministry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

43. Rule of life is an intention to place Jesus Christ at the center of Christian life and ministry and as a tool for bringing Disciples of Christ to a deeper relationship with him and with others. 1 2 3 4
44. I am satisfied with my present growth rate. 1 2 3 4
45. My relationship with Christ is motivated more by love than by duty or fear. 1 2 3 4
46. I believe it's only by the favor of God I could do anything that glorifies the Father. 1 2 3 4
47. I do not have enough practical exposure towards my own spiritual formation. 1 2 3 4
48. Peace, contentment, and joy characterize my life rather than worry and anxiety. 1 2 3 4
49. I regularly read and study the Bible according to a plan. 1 2 3 4
50. I am fond of powerful experiences from above, but I show little interest in becoming deeply rooted in Christ. 1 2 3 4
51. I trust that I need to have a clear view of the Trinity and their unique roles in my life and community to have a true fruitful ministry. 1 2 3 4
52. My prayers focus on expressing God's will rather than my needs. 1 2 3 4
53. My prayer includes silence, praise, intercession, confession, and request. 1 2 3 4
54. I pray because I am aware of my total dependence on God for everything. 1 2 3 4
55. I seek to live in harmony with other members in the family of God. 1 2 3 4
56. I also commit my time to grow in my relationship with others close to me and beyond me in possible ways as I grow in my relationship with the Lord. 1 2 3 4
57. I make my Christian life known to my neighbors and beyond, sharing Christ's love by sharing the gospel and meeting their needs as God leads me. 1 2 3 4
58. I intentionally maintain relationships with those who are not in Christ so that they see Christ through me. 1 2 3 4

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 59. I understand my spiritual gifts and use those gifts to serve others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 60. I commit my resources to help others in my church
and community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 61. I believe I need more grace, structure and support for my own
spiritual formation by the power of the Holy Spirit. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 62. I consciously model my life after Christ not just mentally
but behaviorally. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 63. The main goal of my ministry is to be a Christlike disciple
for the sake of His Kingdom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 64. The emphasis on the practice of the works of ministry rather than
on the life of ministry downplays the practice of abiding in Christ. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 65. As a servant of God, I cannot do anything without Christ. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 66. Intimacy requires intentional personal discipline. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 67. Due to the demands and increasing pressure placed on me,
I would neglect my own spiritual formation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 68. Real evidence of fruitful ministry is growing love towards God,
his family, and the world on a daily basis conforming to the image
of Christ. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 69. Most often I neglect my own spiritual formation as I don't plan
and prioritize my activities on a daily basis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 70. I share the gospel at least with two people once a week
by exemplary life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 71. When the Scriptures reveal an area of my life needing change,
I repent and correct myself in His presence. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 72. My first duty is to love and serve my Lord who is in me and with me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 73. I have an attitude of praying for the Lost throughout each day. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 74. I usually read the Bible only when I need to prepare a Bible study
or a sermon. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 75. I accept that understanding and practicing a personal rule of life
is an essential factor for me and every disciple of Christ
to live out a fruitful life and ministry that glorifies the Father. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

76. I understand that a clear biblical view on ministry and a proper foundation to be united in the Lord in an intentional and structured way of practicing spiritual disciplines would have a constructive and life-transformation effect on the spiritual lives of the pastors, as well as on their approach to ministry.

1 2 3 4

If you have any further comments, please write them in the space below.

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you so much for your cooperation. May god bless you as you journeying with Christ through the next exciting steps of this spiritual formation process!

APPENDIX E

PREPROJECT EVENTS (4 AUGUST 2013)

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.” (John 15:16)

Time	Event
2:00-3:00 p.m.	Welcoming the pastors returning for the program
3:00-4:00 p.m.	Registration, filling the covenant form and allocation of rooms to stay
4:00-5:00 p.m.	Refreshing time to relax and dialogue with each other (refreshments)
5:00-6:30 p.m.	Inauguration with the participation of the invited chief guest The pastors gathered the main conference room I started the inauguration with the entrance of the chief guest Time of worship consecrating the whole process to Jesus Christ Opened platform for chief guest to bless the pastors with Scripture to journeying with Christ: “Let’s rise and go” (John 14:31) Prayer of dedication over the participants
6:30-7:00 p.m.	My speech on the purpose of the program and the participants’ and my expectations and commitments
7:00-7:30 p.m.	Opened platform for the participants for feedback and clarification
7:30-8:30 p.m.	Researcher-designed questionnaire was then given out to the pastors to be applied as the pretest
8:30-9:30 p.m.	Dinner and closing of the evening event.

APPENDIX F
SPIRITUAL FORMATION SEMINAR REGISTRATION
AND COVENANT FORM

My Registration

My Name : _____

Church : _____

Church Address: _____

Home Address: _____

Mobile Phone: _____

Office Phone: _____

E-mail address: _____

My Covenant

I understand that this is a spiritual formation and renewal program for pastors currently serving in the local church. The purpose of this covenant is to inspire and encourage me to partake in-depth learning in understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines that could then serve as a tool for spiritual formation and transformation.

The goal is to encourage me towards a lifelong journey in union with Christ and experience a fruitful life and ministry for the glory of his name. Even though the researcher has the primary responsibility for designing and conducting such a formation program, there is also a part for me to open myself to understand and commit properly to journeying through this process in achieving the set goals.

Therefore, I commit myself this day to participate in the spiritual formation seminar and the whole of this spiritual formation process until the end, including the following commitments.

- I will attend and enthusiastically participate in all three spiritual formation seminars, ranging from August 2013 to October 2013.
- I will honestly and openly respond to all the instrumentation given to me.

APPENDIX G

ACCOUNTABILITY GROUP COVENANT FORM

Our Purpose

We as Christ's disciples understand that we are engrafted to Him and that the secret of fruitful life and ministry is totally linked with our union and communion with Him. As Christ's ministry flows out of our intimacy with Him and intimacy with Christ is tied to the practice of spiritual disciplines, we clearly understand that a correlation exists between intimacy with Christ and practice of spiritual disciplines.

Hence, we are a group of pastors meeting once a month to encourage each other to abide in Christ through five specific spiritual disciplines such as proclaiming the personal knowledge of our union in the Lord, studying the word, having an answered prayer life, loving each other, and witnessing the world respectively, structuring our own lives in such a pattern towards wholeness of Christ and effective ministry in the local church.

We also agree to the following disciplines as a group:

- We take responsibility to do our part assigned to us regarding our own spiritual formation and also offer high concern for the spiritual lives of others in our group.
- We commit to partake in this group for at least three months and attend the scheduled accountability group discussions.
- As we gather we will commit to listen intensely to each other and provide each member an equal proportion of time.
- We agree to keep the confidentiality of other group members, not disclosing confidential data shared by them unless they grant permission.

- We commit to participate honestly and openly in our group discussions and to respect others' opinions.
- We commit to give each pastor the consent to hold each other accountable for the goals we set individually and as a group.
- We commit to pray regularly for all our group members specifically understanding their trials, difficulties, struggles, and also triumphs as they come across when practicing their rule of life and reaching goals.
- We commit to grow as individuals placing ourselves in union and communion with Christ as well as the body of Christ loving and serving each other.

APPENDIX H

SEMINAR MODULES AND MODULE TITLES

Module #	Module Title	Time & Date
01	The vine and the branches—"I am the true vine" Father's role in producing fruit - (vv. 1-2) Nature and importance of spiritual formation Work of the Holy Spirit in spiritual formation	8:30-10:30 a.m. 5 Aug.2013 Monday
02	Union with Christ, grafted—nature of the minister (v. 3) Abiding in Christ—the nature of ministry—ministry as Christ did (vv. 4-6) Fruitful life and ministry is tied with union and communion	11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
03	The means of abiding—spiritual disciplines (vv. 7-17) The correlation exists between intimacy with Christ and spiritual disciplines Specific spiritual disciplines Union—Abide in Christ through the personal experiential Knowledge & faith in the union	2:00-3:30 p.m.
04	Communion Word—abiding in Christ through the word Prayer—abiding in Christ through answered prayer life Community—abiding in Christ through community Crowd—witnessing to the world	4:00-6:00 p.m.
05	Abiding in Christ as the foundation for practicing a rule of life Disciplined life by grace, placing ourselves in such a pattern; to flow out from him for the sake of others by the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of the Father The divine model of the Father and the son in abiding and fruit bearing	6:30-8:00 p.m.
06	Practice of a rule of life and its impact—historical foundations St. Benedict's rule of life and his spiritual disciplines Wesley's practice of rule of life and his spiritual disciplines	8:30-10:30 a.m. 6 Aug.2013 Tuesday
07	Developing and creatively writing a personal rule of life in prayer and wisdom	11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
08	Developing and creatively writing a personal rule of life in prayer and wisdom	2:00-4:00 p.m.
09	Forming the covenant group and implementation of practice of rule of life Early dinner and closing of the first spiritual formation seminar	4:30-6:00 p.m. 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Module #	Module Title	Time & Date
10	Temptations of pastoral ministry Misunderstandings of pastoral leadership Nature of pastoral functions The vulnerabilities of pastoral leadership Contemporary challenges of pastoral leadership Challenges from the past	8:30-10:30 a.m. 2 Sept.2013 Monday
11	Need for restoration to pastoral leadership Constant need for spiritual formation as demand of pastoral ministry goes beyond human capabilities	11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
12	Practicing spiritual disciplines—union and communion	2:00-3:30 p.m.
13	Practicing spiritual disciplines—communion and community	4:00-6:00 p.m.
14	Practicing spiritual disciplines—community and crowd	6:30-8:30 p.m.
15	Practice of rule of life as a tool for spiritual formation	8:30-10:30 a.m. 3 Sept. 2013 Tuesday
16	Nature of spiritual formation and nature of spiritual disciplines 1	11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
17	Nature of spiritual formation and nature of spiritual disciplines 2	2:00-3:30 p.m.
18	Nature of spiritual formation and nature of spiritual disciplines 3 Early dinner and closing of the second spiritual formation seminar	4:00-6:00 p.m. 6:00-7:00 p.m.
19	Soul feast	8:30-10:30 a.m. 7 Oct. 2013 Monday
20	Soul feast	11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
21	Soul feast	2:00-3:30 p.m.
22	Wesley	4:00-6:00 p.m.
23	Benedict	6:30-8:30 p.m.
24	Celebration	8:30-10:30 a.m. 8 Oct.2013 Tuesday
25	Celebration of Disciplines	11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
26	Celebration of Disciplines	2:00-3:30 p.m.
27	Final module of the overall seminars –Celebration of Disciplines	4:00-6:00 p.m.

APPENDIX I

SCHEDULE OF THE FIRST SPIRITUAL FORMATION SEMINAR

Time	Event—Day 1
5:30-7:00 a.m.	Personal devotion and corporate worship
7:00-8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:00-8:30 a.m.	Welcome and introduction to the spiritual formation seminar
8:30-10:30 a.m.	Module 1
10:30-11:00 a.m.	Tea break
11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Module 2
12:30-2:00 p.m.	Lunch and break
2:00-3:30 p.m.	Module 3
3:30-4:00 p.m.	Tea break
4:00-6:00 p.m.	Module 4
6:00-6:30 p.m.	Break
6:30-8:00 p.m.	Module 5
8:00-9:00 p.m.	Dinner and closing
Day 2	
5:30-7:00 a.m.	Personal devotion and corporate worship
7:00-8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:00-8:30 a.m.	Welcome and debriefing
8:30-10:30 a.m.	Module 6
10:30-11:00 a.m.	Tea break
11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Module 7
12:30-2:00 p.m.	Lunch and break
2:00-3:30 p.m.	Module 8
3:30-4:00 p.m.	Tea break
4:00-6:00 p.m.	Module 9
6:00-6:30 p.m.	Early dinner and closing of the first retreat

APPENDIX J

SCHEDULE OF THE SECOND SPIRITUAL FORMATION SEMINAR

2-3 September 2013

Time	Events—Day 1
5:30-7:00 a.m.	Personal devotion and corporate worship
7:00-8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:00-8:30 a.m.	Welcome and Introduction to the second retreat
8:30-10:30 a.m.	Module 10
8:30-11:00 a.m.	Tea break
11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Module 11
12:30-2:00 p.m.	Lunch and break
2:00-3:30 p.m.	Module 12
3:30-4:00 p.m.	Break
4:00-6:00 p.m.	Module 13
6:00-6:30 p.m.	Break
6:30-8:30 p.m.	Module 14
8:30-9:30 p.m.	Dinner and closing
Day 2	
5:30-7:00 a.m.	Practicing <i>lectio divina</i> in both ways together through the word and prayer
7:00-8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:00-8:30 a.m.	Reflections on <i>lectio divina</i>
8:30-10:30 a.m.	Module 15
10:30-11:00 a.m.	Tea break
11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Module 16
12:30-2:00 p.m.	Lunch and break
2:00-3:30 p.m.	Module 17
3:30-4:00 p.m.	Tea break
4:00-6:00 p.m.	Module 18
6:00-6:30 p.m.	Early dinner and closing of the second retreat

APPENDIX K

SCHEDULE OF THE THIRD SPIRITUAL FORMATION SEMINAR

7-9 October 2013

Time	Events—Day 1
5:30-7:00 a.m.	Personal devotion and corporate worship
7:00-8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:00-8:30 a.m.	Welcome and introduction to the third retreat
8:30-10:30 a.m.	Module 19
10:30-11:00 a.m.	Tea break
11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Module 20
12:30-2:00 p.m.	Lunch and break
2:00-3:30 p.m.	Module 21
3:30-4:00 p.m.	Tea break
4:00-6:00 p.m.	Module 22
6:00-6:30 p.m.	Break
6:30-8:30 p.m.	Module 23
8:30-9:30 p.m.	Dinner and closing
Day 2	
5:30-7:00 a.m.	Practicing <i>lectio divina</i> in both ways together through the word and prayer
7:00-8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:00-8:30 a.m.	Reflections on <i>lectio divina</i>
8:30-10:30 a.m.	Module 24
10:30-11:00 a.m.	Tea break
11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Module 25
12:30-2:00 p.m.	Lunch and break
2:00-3:30 p.m.	Module 26
3:30-4:00 p.m.	Tea break
4:00-6:00 p.m.	Module 27
6:00-6:30 p.m.	Early dinner and preparation time for the next day's final session of the last retreat. * Posttest—Given in the evening

Time	Events—Day 2
7.00-10.00 Am	Practicing the five spiritual disciplines learned by the participants in fasting
	Time of individual preparation and committing to practice the covenant of grace
	“Abide in me as I abide in you.”
	UNION-COMMUNION-COMMUNITY-CROWD
	1. Abiding in Christ through knowledge & faith in the union; Professing and claiming our position by faith
	2. Abiding in Christ through studying and living in His word; Scripture reading, meditating, and applying it
	3. Abiding in Christ through biblical prayer; expressing the needs of God through prayer
	4. Abiding in Christ through loving and serving each other
	5. Abiding in Christ through witnessing to the world
	Time of communal preparation as Christ’s body and committing to practice the covenant of grace as a group
	Foot washing
	Holy Communion
	Waiting for the power of the Holy Spirit
	Ordained by the Father
	Sending by Jesus: time of anointing and awarding of the gifts and certificates
	Close of the retreat followed by the fellowship lunch

APPENDIX L

ACCOUNTABILITY COVENANT GROUP MEETINGS SCHEDULE

GROUP A: 2:30-4:00 p.m.; GROUP B: 4:30-6:00 p.m.; GROUP C: 6:30-8:00 p.m.	
Meeting 1	The day prior to second spiritual formation seminar (1 Sept. 2013)
Meeting 2	The day prior to third spiritual formation seminar (6 Oct. 2013)
Meeting 3	One month after third spiritual formation seminar (4 Nov. 2013)
One hour	Time of sharing by each other
	Faithfulness to practice rule of life
	Successes, failures, report on goals of last four weeks
One hour	Review of goals for the next four weeks

APPENDIX M

COVER LETTER FOR FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

Date: ____/____/2013

Dear Pastor,

The enclosed questionnaire is the **first/second/third** in the series of surveys designed to understand better how the spiritual formation seminars have impacted your life and ministry in the Lord. I am especially interested in how the role of practicing the rule of life as a tool for spiritual formation has helped you in growing your intimacy with Christ as well as ministry. Since it is so vital to the research that I receive this information subsequent to your participation in the seminar, I really appreciate your assistance in filling out the follow-up survey at this time. Your open and honest sharing is always a great blessing and encouragement to me and a source of learning, as well.

Please complete the questionnaire and return it to me at your earliest convenience (at least within two weeks from the date you received the survey form) in the enclosed, postage-paid envelope or by e-mail. I have asked for the first three letters of your initials to provide a security code for research purposes only (to help in the data analysis). The results will be posted as a collective; privacy will be ensured because individual responses and personal names will remain confidential.

I have also enclosed the schedule of our **first/second/third** accountability meeting and the schedule of the **first/second/third** spiritual formation seminar for your easy perusal so that you may come prepared and have a wonderful time in the Lord through your small group gathering and interaction as well as in the spiritual formation seminars.

I am looking forward to seeing you again and am eager to know how God is working in your life and ministry for fulfilling his purposes through you for the sake of others. Please be kind enough to confirm your participation for the next accountability group and spiritual formation seminar by calling my mobile phone or by sending me an e-mail within two weeks. Thank you so much for your kind consideration.

Faithfully,

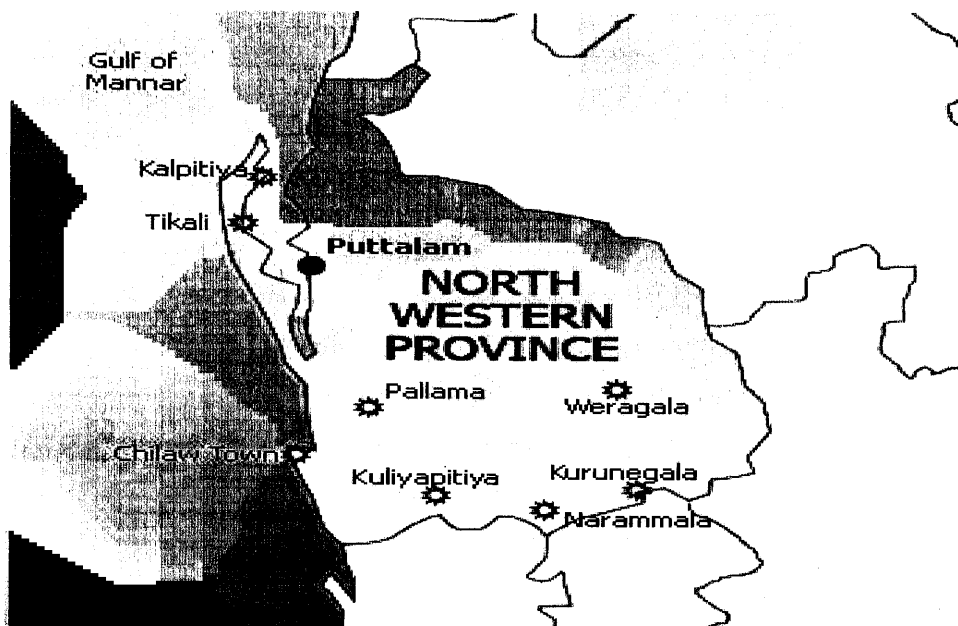
Rev. Upul Nishantha Silva
Senior Pastor and General Secretary for the North Western Province,
Assembly of God
Kuliyapitiya

Security Code: (Please print the first three letters of your initials)
--

<p>Please tick below the survey you are currently completing() First Survey (after the first SFS) () Second Survey (after the second SFS)</p> <p>() Third Survey (after the third SFS) SFS = Spiritual Formation Seminar</p>				
1. How have the spiritual formation seminars helped you in understanding and practice of rule of life as a tool for your spiritual formation? Give some examples.				
2. How have the spiritual formation seminars helped you in your approach to ministry and ministerial activities? Give some examples.				
3. How do you explain the correlation between intimacy with Christ and practice of ministry?				
4. What are some difficulties you face as you intentionally commit to practice your personal rule of life? What are some areas you need to improve to handle these problems better?				
5. What differences in your ministry have you observed after applying the principles taught in the seminars?				
6. What aspects of the seminars were the most helpful? (i.e., which parts)				
7. What aspects of the seminars were least helpful? (i.e., which parts)				

APPENDIX N

NORTHWESTERN PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA



Source: File: North Western Province Map, mapsofworld.com

APPENDIX O

SAMPLE GOAL-SETTING SHEET—A *PERSONAL RULE OF LIFE*

Nature	Means of Grace—Spiritual Disciplines	Daily Practices	Weekly Practices	Monthly Practices	Yearly Practices
Union—Jesus in me	Proclamation of personal knowledge & faith in the union (praise and worship)				
	Living in the Word				
	Bible				
	Reading				
	Studying				
	Practicing				
Communion—Jesus in me and I in Jesus	Other books related to Scripture				
	Praying in the will of God				
	Personal prayers				
	Family prayers				
	Church team prayers				
	Other				
	Loving & serving each other				
	Myself and family				
	Self				
	Family				
	Wife				
	Children				
Community—Jesus and I in the community	Parents				
	Others				
	Church Family				
	Discipleship team				
	Believers in local church				
	Believers in other churches				
	Friends				
	Others				
	Witnessing to the world				
	Closest neighbors				
	Village				
	City				
Crowd—Jesus and I in the crowd	District				
	Province				
	Country				
	Beyond				

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